

The Homeric Hymns

A Translation, with Introduction and Notes

Diane J. Rayor

Updated Edition



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

Berkley Los Angeles London

University of California Press, one of the most distinguished university presses in the United States, enriches lives around the world by advancing scholarship in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Its activities are supported by the UC Press Foundation and by philanthropic contributions from individuals and institutions. For more information, visit www.ucpress.edu.

University of California Press
Berkeley and Los Angeles, California

University of California Press, Ltd.
London, England

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ISBN 978-0-520-28211-7 (paper)
ISBN 978-0-520-95782-4 (ebook)

The Library of Congress has cataloged an earlier edition of this book as follows:

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Homeric hymns. English.

The Homeric hymns : translation, with introduction and notes, Diane J. Rayor.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.).

ISBN 978-0-520-23993-7 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Homeric hymns—Translations into English. 2. Hymns, Greek (Classical)—Translations into English. 3. Gods, Greek—Poetry. I. Rayor, Diane J. II. Title.

PA4125.H8R395 2004

883'.01—dc21

2003005065

To David and Daniel, with love

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PREFACE

In the ten years since the first edition of this book appeared, the *Homeric Hymns* have only increased in popularity among readers and scholars. In addition to some new reading recommendations and minor corrections, the second edition has revisions to the *Hymn to Dionysos* 1, including twenty-eight new lines. The *Hymn to Dionysos* 1 once was one of the longer hymns, at 411 lines; the new fragments help to reveal the story of Hera's acceptance of Dionysos on Mount Olympos.

The *Hymn to Dionysos* 7 begins with "I will remember," and the *Hymn to Apollo* 3 adds, "I will remember and not forget." Altogether or singly, the hymns are worth remembering, particularly along with Homer or Hesiod. The *Homeric Hymns* provide an excellent addition to mythology, religion, gender, literature, and civilization courses because of their short length, accessible narratives, general interest, and connections to other classical and modern works.

As quick introductions to Greek gods, the short hymns immediately reveal some of the complexities and subtleties in Greek thought. For example, the *Iliad* portrays Ares, the god of war, as utterly bloodthirsty. In the *Hymn to Ares*, however, he is also the god who grants the courage for peace:

But you, Blessed One,
give me courage to stay within the gentle laws of peace,
fleeing enemy battle and violent death. (8.15-17)

The *Hymn to Dionysos* 7 functions as a brief introduction to Euripides' *Bacchae*, regarding Dionysos' demeanor, attributes, and double aspect as beneficent or deadly depending on human recognition of his divine self. Since Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (3.511-733) combines this hymn and the *Bacchae*, the three works illustrate how authors borrowed and adapted myths in antiquity.

As in Hesiod's creation tale, *Theogony*, the short *Hymn to Aphrodite* 6 and *Hymn to Athena* 28 focus on these goddesses' double or unusual births:

From his august head, cunning Zeus
himself gave birth to her, born in warlike armor
of gleaming gold. Awe seized all the gods watching.
She sprang quickly from his immortal head
and stood in front of Zeus who bears the aegis,
shaking her sharp spear. (28.4-9)

Paired with the Athenian black figure amphora image of fully armed Athena stepping out of Zeus' head, this hymn helps us remember the attributes of Zeus' "brain child," the goddess of wisdom. Like fine wines with distinctive foods, the hymns add value in pairings with other ancient literature.

While the entire collection of hymns is essential reading in mythology courses, the addition of one or two of the four longer hymns can enrich other courses. For example, ancient religion and Greek civilization courses benefit from studying the *Hymn to Apollo* 3 for the founding of Delphi and the *Hymn to Demeter* 2 for the Thesmophoria and the Eleusinian Mysteries. The *Hymn to Demeter* 2 and the *Hymn to Aphrodite* 5 are essential reading in women in antiquity courses. For those interested in love poetry, the *Hymn to Aphrodite* 5 makes a fascinating comparison to the erotic poetry of Sappho, Anakreon, and Archilochos. A Sappho fragment poignantly expresses the human passion, aging, and mortality central to the *Hymn to Aphrodite's* story of Tithonos (5.218-38):

For they say rosy-armed Dawn in love
went to the ends of earth holding Tithonos,

beautiful and young, but in time gray old age
seized even him with an immortal wife.

(Constantine et al. 2010: 92)

Before studying Homer's *Iliad*, reading the shorter narrative of the *Hymn to Aphrodite* 5 introduces issues such as conflict among the gods, divine interference in human lives, and the ethical construct stated in Seth Schein's *The Mortal Hero*: people's "characteristic blend of responsibility and lack of ultimate power" (23).

More than the other hymns, the *Hymn to Demeter* 2—the story of Persephone's kidnapping by the Lord of the Dead—is particularly versatile, in its recognition value, richness, and sheer beauty. This earliest version of the myth is far more complex than simply an explanation of the seasons. Demeter's relationship with human beings is complicated. She suffers like a human when she loses her child yet is unsympathetic to Queen Metaneira's fearful cry as Demeter roasts her baby in the fire. What does Demeter's sojourn with the people of Eleusis, told only in this hymn, add to the story? Does her experience among humans, deceptive and potentially fatal as it is, lead to her eventual bounty, as Helene Foley (1994) suggests? Demeter is willing to kill off the human race to regain her daughter yet returns fertility and grants salvation through the Eleusinian Mysteries.

The *Hymn to Demeter* 2 helps illuminate the daily life of women in ancient Greece. We do not tend to associate marriage with death, while Greek thought, literature, and ritual closely connect them. For Demeter, Persephone's marriage to Hades is her closest experience with death, since she cannot initially or fully retrieve Persephone. The marriage of Hades and Persephone, frequently retold and referenced, became a motif of marrying death. Girls married in their young teens, and "women who give birth before the age of seventeen have a higher mortality rate than older

women" (Demand 1994: 102). Infant mortality was high as well. A funeral could indeed follow swiftly after a wedding, transforming "the melody / of weddings to the sound of wailing dirges" (Rayor 1991: 124). In addition, wedding and funeral rites, in which women played a crucial role, share many attributes. The bride and the corpse were washed, dressed, anointed, and either veiled (bride) or shrouded (corpse). Both journeyed to a new home, led by a procession of family and friends carrying torches, with song and dance, blessings, gifts, and a feast (Rehm 1994: 29).

Feminist theory, explored through selected articles and modern poetry, can deepen readings of the hymn as well. For example, Nanci DeBloois's "Rape, Marriage, or Death? Gender Perspectives in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter" provides a clear feminist analysis and profound insight. According to the male deities Zeus, Hades, and Helios, this was a traditional marriage, arranged between the father and the bridegroom. According to Demeter, Persephone, and Hekate, however, it was an abduction and rape. The Persephone and Hades poems in Louise Glück's *Averno* also explore gendered perspectives. In "Persephone the Wanderer,"

Persephone is having sex in hell.
Unlike the rest of us, she doesn't know
what winter is, only that
she is what causes it. (2007: 17)

In this version, Glück sees the story of Persephone "as an argument between the mother and the lover— / the daughter is just meat" (19).

Caroline A. Perkins's article "Persephone's Lie in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*" and Harryette Mullen's poem "Miss Persephone" explore Persephone's story to her mother about how she came to ingest that pomegranate seed. Did Hades use it like a date-rape drug, "secretly slipping it to her," or compel her "by force to eat, most unwillingly," as

Persephone tells her mother? The hymn's narrative says at 371-74:

But he gave her
a honey-sweet pomegranate seed to eat,
secretly slipping it to her, so she would not remain
with holy, dark-robed Demeter forever.

While Persephone says at 406-13:

Indeed I will tell you, Mother, the whole truth.
When Hermes, the swift runner, came to me
from my father, son of Kronos, and the other gods
to bring me from Erebus, so you could see me
and give up anger and dread wrath against the gods,
I leapt with joy, but secretly Kronos' other son
put into me a pomegranate seed, honey-sweet food,
compelling me by force to eat, most unwillingly.

According to Mullen, Persephone knew what she was doing and lied to her mother, claiming "technical virginity: / 'I only swallowed his seeds'" (1981: 31):

So now you lead a double life,
you two-faced hussy.
In spring you do the fake virgin act
to please your ma, who pretends to believe it.
But in the dark cold months of winter
you heat the sheets of Hades
when your lusty lover
takes his share.

A surprising interpretation indeed, yet based on the hymn. Mullen's "Miss Persephone" also illustrates how myths change, granting us license to join in the conversation. In my husband's classroom, his students explored these three scenarios: Would Persephone be unhappy with her time split between mother and husband? Before they reach the final compromise, whereby Persephone will split each year between Hades and Demeter, what would a family meeting or

therapy session with Zeus, Demeter, and Persephone discover? What might any of the four major characters write in a letter to one of the others?

Even versions that veer far from the myth, such as the film *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* (2010), in which the child, a son, rescues his kidnapped mother from Hades, can draw us back to the source. Is this merely a reversal of mother and child to fit the young adult genre? Or is Percy Jackson playing Demophon, the son Demeter tries to steal into immortality, who could be more powerful than Zeus and be able to cross the boundaries of death and return?

The *Hymn to Helios* 31 and the *Hymn to Selene* 32 state in their last lines that they were meant as preludes before epic tales. Let us continue to read and remember the *Homeric Hymns* as introductions to a range of ancient and modern literature and topics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Of the many people who enhanced this project, I especially thank Elizabeth Rosa Horan, for her meticulous criticism of the long hymns, and Connie Rayor, for her insightful, detailed suggestions on the rest of the book. I gratefully acknowledge Seth Schein's helpful criticism. Ron Dwelle, Barbara Flaschenriem, Stanley Lombardo, Darlene Malcolm-Clarke, Melissa Morison, Charles Pazdernik, and Janet Rayor each provided valuable assistance in finding the right word, tone, meaning, reference, map, or sailing term. Daniel Hast helped me hear the poetry. David Hast has my special gratitude for his skillful prose editing and steady encouragement. Malcolm and Adele Hast supplied the *Barrington Atlas*. Ginny Klingenberg gave generously of her time and expertise on formatting the manuscript.

Grand Valley State University and the English Department supported the work with a sabbatical semester and my colleagues in the Classics Department continue to provide good company and lively discussion. These translations have been shaped in the fire of the classroom. I thank the professors who have used them in their classes, and my students for their questions and suggestions.

I first began to think about the *Homeric Hymns* in 1982 when Norman O. Brown (1913-2002) asked me, as his teaching assistant at the University of California at Santa Cruz, to lecture on the *Hymn to Demeter*. Now this project concludes under the thoughtful care of Kate Toll and the

University of California Press. I am profoundly grateful for the careful readings and precise suggestions from the two anonymous Press referees.



Key locations.

Introduction

The *Homeric Hymns* have survived for two and a half millennia because of their captivating stories, beautiful language, and religious significance. I have been teaching the *Hymns* in courses—mythology, classical literature, women in antiquity, and Greek language—for many years. I love them, and my students usually do too. The myths in these poems raise questions that humanity still struggles to answer—questions about our relationships with others and our place in the world.

The *Homeric Hymns* is a collection of thirty-four poems: thirty-three invoke and celebrate the gods and one addresses “hosts,” either the hosts of the immediate performance or all those in general who provide hospitality. The *Hymns* are “Homeric” because they are composed in the same traditional epic meter (dactylic hexameter), dialect, and style as Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. They are “hymns” in that each poem celebrates the attributes or epiphany of the god or goddess to whom the hymn is addressed. The longer hymns worship a deity by telling the story of how he or she obtains or exercises power. In general, the hymns express the essence of the particular deity. Although Thucydides (3.104), our earliest reference to the *Hymns*, assumes that Homer himself composed and performed these works, they are actually anonymous poems. Most were written in the archaic and early classical periods in Greece (700–500 B.C.E.); a few may have been composed as late as Hellenistic times (third to

second centuries B.C.E.), and one may be from fifth century C.E. (see the notes on *Ares* 8). The earliest *Hymns* may be contemporary with the poetry of Homer and Hesiod; more likely, they appeared immediately afterward.

SURVIVAL

The *Homeric Hymns* were collected in antiquity and set in the order presented here. Multiple copies of the collection that survive from the Byzantine period begin with the third hymn, the *Hymn to Apollo* 3. These manuscripts were attached to copies of Homer's epics or were included with the works of later poets. It is unknown how the *Hymn to Ares* 8, which does not match the others in style or subject, came to be included with the others. The editors of the standard English-language commentary on the *Hymns* speculate that "some one at a late period, observing there was no hymn to Ares in the collection, added this one, and put it in the 8th place to come alphabetically before Artemis" (Allen, Halliday, and Sikes 1936: 385). Chance and good luck led to the survival of a fragment of the *Hymn to Dionysos* (1.10-21) and the entire *Hymn to Demeter* 2 in a fifteenth-century C.E. manuscript, which was discovered in a stable in Moscow in 1777.

RELIGIOUS MEANING

The *Hymns* provide introductions to the principal ancient Greek deities, and they include some of the earliest literary references to key religious rituals and sites. The *Hymn to Demeter* 2, one of the most beautiful and moving stories in Greek literature, is also the earliest literary version of one of the myths behind the foundation of the Eleusinian Mysteries, a popular mystery religion practiced from the eighth century B.C.E. to the fourth century C.E. Its story of Demeter and her daughter, Persephone or Kore (Girl), is the basis of various women's festivals, such as the Thesmophoria. Similarly, the

Hymn to Apollo 3 describes the mythical foundation of Delphi, the most famous oracular site in ancient Greece.

In religious terms, to “hymn” the god is to sing a song of praise, to celebrate the god through song. Most of the *Homeric Hymns* end with a prayer to the god of that hymn. The ancient singer (bard) and community worshipped the deity through the song. The poet’s rendition of these stories was synonymous with worship; their telling invoked the gods even as it recalled events that changed the world. Because Apollo slew the dragon and established his temple at Delphi, ancient worshippers believed, they were granted access to “unerring counsel” (*Apollo* 3.253, 293). They could go to Delphi and consult Apollo through his oracle. Because Demeter experienced the loss and recovery of her daughter Persephone, she established the Eleusinian Mysteries. For initiates, the daughter’s descent to the underworld and return continued annually, giving them hope for better afterlives. These foundation or birth myths had essential significance for communities of worshippers.

PERFORMANCE

The genre of Homeric hymns probably began as short introductions to the long recitations of traditional, oral epic poetry that was popular centuries before the advent of writing in Greece in the eighth century B.C.E. Most of the short hymns in this collection seem appropriate invocations to a god in prelude to a narrative tale; two hymns (31 and 32) specifically say in conclusion that the bard will next turn to a recitation of epic poetry:

I will sing about the glory of demigods, whose deeds
the bards, servants of the Muses, celebrate in sweet song.
(32.19-20)

As these “preludes” grew into longer, more complex narrative tales, the recitation of the hymn may have become the main

event. It is possible, though, that even the long hymns continued to be preludes: Thucydides (3.104) refers to the 546-line *Hymn to Apollo* 3 as a *prooimion* (prelude).

The *Homeric Hymns* were “sung or recited solo by specialists” who “preserved traditional material and passed it on, not in fixed form but through recomposition-in-performance,” a kind of improvisation based on familiarity with a long oral poetic tradition (Stehle 1997: 170). Early on, those specialists or bards were called singers (*aoidoi*) and perhaps accompanied their songs with a lyre. Later, rhapsodes (literally, “stitchers of songs”) recited poetry, while beating time with a staff. Bards traveled throughout the Greek world to perform on a variety of special occasions: “Music played a role in every moment of Greek communal life—in religious ceremonies, competitions, symposia, festivals, even in political contentions” (Comotti 1989: 6). Many performances took place in competitions sponsored by religious centers, states, kings, or prominent families. The *Hymn to Apollo* 3 may have been performed in the competitions at Delphi, or perhaps at the festival of Apollo on the island of Delos that is mentioned in the hymn itself (149–64). Bards may have sung the *Hymn to Demeter* 2 at religious festivals such as the Eleusinian Mysteries at Eleusis, or any of the local women’s festivals in honor of Demeter, such as the Thesmophoria. Perhaps the *Hymn to Aphrodite* 5 was performed at a private banquet, like the one in the *Odyssey* at which the bard sings of Ares and Aphrodite’s adulterous affair (8.256–366). The *Hymn to Hermes* 4 would be perfect fare for young men at a symposium or a feast, as mentioned in the hymn, when Hermes sings in accompaniment to his newly invented lyre (55–59).

Ten of the hymns state the context of the performance (“grant me victory in this contest, ready my song,” 6.20) or make a request to the god for prosperity (“gladly grant a welcome livelihood for my song,” 2.494). Thus, at the end of these hymns, the bard asks that the god praised in the hymn bestow success. In order to win a contest or otherwise

perform a hymn successfully, the bard would need to select and shape material drawn from the vast range of possibilities offered by the oral poetic tradition. Since many stories and powers are connected with each god, the bard had to choose the details that would best serve the god in the context of a particular performance. In the *Hymn to Apollo*, the bard twice asks Apollo, “How to praise you, celebrated in so many hymns?” (3.19, 207), before settling on a specific part of the story. According to Eva Stehle, the bard must “persuade the audience that he speaks ‘truth’ either by adapting his story to local interests . . . and winning assent that way or by offering a ‘Panhellenic’ story that includes no concession to the audience but signals its validity through its rhetoric” (1997: 174–75).

FORMAL STYLE

The hymn is a distinctive genre with formal features, including a characteristic structure (Janko 1981). Like the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Homeric hymns use *formulae*, the building blocks of oral composition, in which phrases recur repeatedly in the same metrical position in the dactylic hexameter line. Short formulae, such as the epithets “rich-haired Demeter” or “far-shooting Apollo,” recur frequently in the *Hymns*. It usually is thought that this use of set formulae provided breathing space for the bard to improvise, but the repeated epithets also help characterize the deities—the goddess of grain and fertility, earth mother Demeter, grows abundant hair, and Apollo, god of healing and plague, shoots his arrows of sickness from far off.

Most of the hymns begin with a formulaic introduction, such as “I sing to Pallas Athena, dread guardian of the city” (11.1). In the Greek, the god’s name appears in the first line of thirty-one of the thirty-three hymns (all but *Dionysos* 1 and *Pan* 19); in most, it is the first word. At some point in the hymn, usually at the end, the poet directly addresses the deity. As in traditional Greek prayers, the hymn always

invokes the deity by name and major attributes, and often mentions important cult sites or other mythological connections, as in this *Hymn to Aphrodite* (the Cyprian):

I will sing to Cyprian Cytheria, who gives
kind gifts to mortals; on her lovely face,
ever smiling, an alluring bloom shimmers.
Hail, Goddess, ruling well-built Salamis
and Cyprus in the sea: give me an alluring song, (10.1-5)

All but two of the hymns to gods have formulaic endings; the *Hymn to Hera* 12 is probably incomplete, and the *Hymn to Ares* 8 is more of a “cletic” or summoning prayer and, as noted above, was written far later than the rest of the collection. The closing formulae range from two to four lines. Twenty-nine of the thirty-three address the deity with the salutation “*khaire*” (“hail,” “farewell,” “rejoice”):

Hail, child of fair Semele! There is no way
to forget you and still compose sweet song. (Dionysos 7.58-59)

Fifteen hymns end with a variation of “I began with you and will turn to the rest of the hymn” (5.293), or “But I will remember you and the rest of the song” (2.495). This means that the poet invokes the god’s presence by singing that hymn—“remembering is making present”—and now will move on to sing the next part of the song, perhaps an epic tale (see Bakker 2002: 72). The word in Greek for “the rest of” (*allos*) could mean “another,” which then would refer to another, separate song that the bard plans to sing. In time, the closing formula may also have become simply a traditional way to end a hymn, without referring to an actual transition from one part of the song to another or from one song to a different one.

LONG HYMNS

The *Hymns* consist of four long narrative poems (293 to 580 lines) and twenty-nine short poems (3 to 59 lines). While a few of the short hymns are narratives, most are invocations that provide snapshots of the gods. The long narratives—*Hymns* 2-5, to Demeter, Apollo, Hermes, and Aphrodite—each tell a revealing story about a critical event in the deity's life that led to a change in his or her power. They show the cosmos itself in the process of being ordered in its details, though its broad patterns are already in place. Zeus' rule, too, is new and perhaps not yet firmly established. The story of the divine realm as told in the *Hymns* provides the missing link between Hesiod's *Theogony* and Homer's epics (see Clay 1989: 11). Zeus first takes power in the *Theogony*; in Homer, this power is firmly set and unchallenged, and the hierarchy of the gods fixed. Homer shifts the focus from the gods' power struggles with one another to their relationships to human beings. Even Hera's conflicts with Zeus in the *Iliad* are, in the end, ineffectual and do not seriously challenge his power or the world order.

In the long hymns, while all four gods are subordinate to Zeus, they remain potentially threatening, and their power gives us a more complete and complex picture of the Greek worldview. Three gods—Apollo, Hermes, and Aphrodite—are Zeus' children; Demeter is his sister and the mother of his daughter Persephone. Apollo and Hermes could have challenged Zeus' authority, but do not. Demeter does challenge Zeus. The *Hymn to Aphrodite* states that Aphrodite has disrupted Zeus in the past, by "mating him with mortal women," making him "forget Hera, sister and wife" (5.39-40). Zeus' children ultimately submit to Zeus' order. Demeter is also integrated into or subordinated to the Olympian patriarchy—although, perhaps, she finds a way to make that order acceptable to her.

The two hymns celebrating male gods tell the tale of Apollo's and Hermes' births, how they got their powers and won their places in the pantheon. Apollo could have been a threat to Zeus; the other gods fear him before his birth,

because “they say Apollo will be extremely reckless/and rule mightily over the immortal gods” (3.67-68). Instead, the hymn makes clear that Apollo works for his father and in his interests. As Apollo says immediately after his birth, “I will proclaim to humans the unerring will of Zeus” (3.132).

The trickster Hermes, too, had the potential to disrupt Zeus’ order. However, while his thievery and cleverness get the better of his half-brother Apollo, Hermes’ birth is shown to be according to Zeus’ will (4.10). As Maia, Hermes’ mother, says, “Your father bore you to be a great pest/for mortal men and immortal gods” (4.160-61). When the newborn Hermes denies Apollo’s truthful claim that Hermes stole his cattle, “Zeus laughed aloud to see his deceitful child/so skillfully deny the business of the cattle” (4.389-90). Hermes tricks his brother, but leaves Zeus alone. In contrast, in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, when the trickster Prometheus challenges Zeus’ authority (521-25), Zeus punishes him severely. As celebrated in the two hymns, Apollo and Hermes gain their spheres of power and join the family of gods headed by father Zeus: “the two handsome children of Zeus/hastened to snow-covered Olympos” (4.504-5).

The two hymns to the female goddesses, Demeter and Aphrodite, differ strikingly from those to Apollo and Hermes. Demeter and Aphrodite are fully mature goddesses in these poems, which celebrate their primary aspects of fertility and sexuality, respectively. Yet both hymns tell stories that demonstrate restrictions on Demeter’s and Aphrodite’s powers.

The *Hymn to Aphrodite* celebrates a distinct limitation of Aphrodite’s power over sexuality. Zeus contrives Aphrodite’s defeat and humiliation through her own sexuality. Aphrodite had been demonstrating her power over all the gods, including Zeus, by making them lose control, mate with humans, and give birth to or father mortal children. Her power threatens Zeus, “deceiving even his strong mind whenever she wished,/easily mating him with mortal women” (5.38-39). In order to stop the intermingling of human and

divine, and to establish firmly his own rule, Zeus usurps Aphrodite's power: "Casting sweet desire into Aphrodite's own heart,/Zeus made her long for a human man" (5.45-46). By having sex with a mortal man, Aphrodite is reduced to the same shameful position as the gods she previously manipulated. Once on their level, she loses her special power over the other gods to make them mate with humans, though she does maintain her ability to cause humans, animals, and even gods to desire their own kind.

The *Hymn to Demeter* celebrates Demeter's power and her rescue of Persephone from the underworld. Unlike Aphrodite, she does not explicitly lose any established powers. In the hymn, Zeus attempts to assert his control over Demeter, but his plans are only partially fulfilled, and then not through his own doing. When Zeus gives his and Demeter's daughter to their brother Hades, he ignores Demeter's rights as a goddess and mother. When Demeter challenges Zeus by withdrawing her fertility from the earth, and famine results, Zeus must recall Persephone from the underworld. Demeter thus successfully challenges Zeus to win her daughter's return, but Hades foils a complete reversal. Persephone must return to Hades for a third of each year because Hades "put into" her a pomegranate seed (2.412), which binds her to him. Earlier in the poem, Demeter's attempt to make a human boy immortal, perhaps to compensate for her loss of Persephone and to contrive against Zeus and Hades, also fails. Just as each year Persephone must return to the underworld, so humans must die—Demeter cannot grant immortality. Yet despite the inevitability of death, Demeter gives humanity continuity by returning fertility to the land and people; through children, a kind of immortality becomes possible.

The *Hymn to Demeter* seems to be told from the mother's point of view, and gives equal weight to the glory of the life-giving powers of the mother and her sadness over the loss of her daughter. The hymn emphasizes first Demeter's limitations, then her strength, and Persephone's new role as

queen of the underworld. According to Ann Suter, a woman may have composed this anonymous hymn. The focus on Demeter's power, Persephone's coming-of-age, and the mother-daughter relationship, as well as the de-emphasis of Zeus, may point in that direction (Suter 2005). We know that female poets, such as Sappho and Korinna, composed dactylic hexameter verses. In examining the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, Richard Janko notes "a number of verbal parallels between its opening and Sappho's epicising narrative of the wedding of Hektor and Andromache (44 L-P)" (1982: 169-70). Korinna says she reworks "stories from our fathers' time" and sings of "heroes/male and female" (Rayor 1991: 1.9, 10.1-2). It is possible that other women composed hymns or epic verse, although their performance venues certainly would be more limited than those for traditional bardic poetry.

TRANSLATION

Because the hymns were composed for performance, I focused on the harmonious sound of the language, and gave public readings as part of the translation process. I never introduce new images or otherwise add anything that I do not see in the Greek. Accuracy is my primary goal—yet I don't believe that accuracy and beauty need be mutually exclusive. I have worked to make these translations precise in meaning and grammatically correct. While I have presented them in full, including even such clumsy (by modern standards) conventions as the long geographical lists in the *Hymn to Apollo*, I have also striven to retain their beauty. They must be pleasant in the mouth and to the ear in order to accurately convey the Greek original.

In all my translations, I use modern poetic language and do not attempt to make the poems sound old by employing archaic devices. However, I also retain the ancient images and do not substitute modern or more familiar ones. Readers understand that the hymns come from a distant time and place. The experience of reading a translation should be as

close as possible to that of reading the Greek text. To recreate the vivid and direct effects of the Greek, a good translation will retain specific details, while compensating for formal aspects, such as the meter, that don't work well in English.

TEXTUAL GUIDE

I have addressed the notes primarily to readers who, approaching the poems for the first time, desire additional background or historical and geographical details. The English spelling of Greek names and places has always been problematic, since we are accustomed to seeing many Greek names in their Latinized forms. Greek and Latin transliterations differ mainly in three obvious ways: Greek has *k*, not *c*; generally *o* before a final *s*, instead of *u*; and *i* instead of *e* after *a*. This leads to *Hephaistos* and *Asklepios*, rather than the more familiar *Hephaestus* and *Asclepius*. Although I usually employ the Greek spelling for names of gods and people, I have made a few exceptions to ease recognition or pronunciation; for example, the Greek *Athene* appears as the familiar *Athena*. For all place-names, however, I have followed the invaluable *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (2000). Proper names should be pronounced the way they are spelled, sounding every syllable; Greek has no silent *e*. The names of gods and humans have a stress accent either on the penult (A-phro-DI'-te) or on the antepenult (Per-SE'-pho-ne)—the glossary indicates which. The first time a name occurs in one of the *Hymns*, the corresponding note provides details; a short version is repeated in the glossary.

For the most part, the translations match the Greek texts line-by-line, although some maneuvering has been necessary for English sense and grace. I have sometimes added an extra space between lines to separate parts of the story. The marginal line numbers in the translations correspond to those in the Greek texts. Ellipsis dots mark missing words or

phrases. Brackets mark conjectures by the editors of the Greek. I have translated from the texts of Thomas Allen's *Homeri Opera* (1912) and N.J. Richardson's *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (1974), in consultation with Filippo Càssola's *Inni Omerici* (1997).

1. HYMN TO DIONYSOS

Some say in Drakanos, others in windy Ikaros,
still others say in Naxos, O Bullgod son of Zeus,
or there by the deep-eddying river Alpheos,
pregnant Semele bore you to thunder-loving Zeus.
Others say you were born in Thebes, Lord,
but all of them lie: the father of men and gods
gave birth
to you far from people, hidden from white-armed
Hera.

Nysa is the place, a mighty peak blooming with
woods,
far from Phoenicia, near the river Nile.

None of the human race sails there, 1
0
with no harbor for their curved ships,
for a high, steep cliff encircles it.
Yet it grows many lovely delicacies . . .

[missing lines]

[Vines] lush with their clusters of dark
grapes . . .

[missing lines]

[Zeus to Hera:]

“. . . you wish. How could you suffer more
shamefully?

I too acted foolishly . . .

. . . Hephaistos left on his own . . .

. . . as they assume forever . . .

He tricked you, binding you in chains from
Tartaros.

Who, my dear, can free you? A painful belt 2
0

wraps around your body, while Hephaistos
pays no mind to command or plea,
but devises firm resolve in his heart.

Sister, you bore a cruel son

crafty though lame . . .

. . . before his feet . . . good . . .

. . . he rages . . .

. . . angry . . .

Let us see if he will soften his iron heart at all.

Two smart sons of mine are handy 3
0

to help in your troubles—Ares is one,
who wields a sharp spear, a tough fighter . . .

And there is Dionysos . . .

But Hephaistos better not start a contest with me
or he will stagger away struck by my lightning.

. . . sweet . . .

. . . this boy of mine . . .

[missing lines]

People will raise many statues in his temples.

Since there are three . . . , every third year
humans will always sacrifice a hundred perfect
bulls." 4
0

So spoke the son of Kronos nodding his dark-blue
brows—

the king's divine hair swirled about
his immortal head, as he shook great Olympos.

With those words, wise Zeus nodded his
command.

Be gracious, Bullgod, maker of maenads.
We bards sing of you first and last; there is no way
to forget you and still remember holy song.
O Dionysos, Bullgod son of Zeus, rejoice
with your mother Semele, whom some call
Thyone.

2. HYMN TO DEMETER

I sing of the revered goddess, rich-haired
Demeter,
and her slim-ankled daughter, whom Hades
snatched
(far-seeing, thundering Zeus gave her away)
while she and Ocean's deep-breasted daughters
played,
far from golden blade Demeter, who bears
shining fruit.

She picked lush meadow flowers: roses, crocuses,
lovely violets, irises, hyacinths—and a narcissus
Gaia grew as a lure for the blossoming girl,
following Zeus' bidding, to please Lord of the
Dead.

Everyone marveled at the bewitching sight,
immortal gods and mortal folk alike:
from its root blossomed a hundred sweetly
scented heads, and all wide heaven above,
all earth, and the salty swell of the sea laughed.
Amazed, she stretched out both hands to pick
the charming bloom—and a chasm opened
in the Nysian plain. Out sprang Lord of the Dead,
god of many names, on his immortal horses.
Snatching the unwilling girl, he carried her off
in his golden chariot, as she cried and screamed
aloud

calling to her father, son of Kronos, highest and best.

None of the immortal gods or mortal folk
heard her cry, nor the Olives shining with fruit—
except the daughter of Perses, tender-hearted
Hekate, veiled in light, heard from her cave
and Lord Helios, Hyperion's shining son,
heard the girl calling to her father, son of Kronos.
Zeus sat far away from the gods, in his temple
echoing

with prayers, accepting rich offerings from
mortals.

But her father's brother, Kronos' son of many³
names, 0

Lord of the Many Dead, stole the unwilling girl
away on his immortal horses, with a nod from
Zeus.

While the goddess could still gaze at earth
and starry heaven, strong rush of the fish-
abundant sea
and sun's rays, she still hoped to see her dear
mother
and the race of gods who live forever:
hope yet charmed her strong mind though she
grieved.

The mountain peaks and the sea depths echoed
with her eternal cry, and her goddess mother
heard her.

Sharp grief seized her heart; with both hands 4
0

she tore the veil from her ambrosial hair,
threw a black cloak across her shoulders

and sped like a bird over the nourishing land and
sea,
searching: but none of the immortal gods
or mortal folk would tell her the truth,
nor did omen birds bring true messages.

Nine days Queen Deo wandered
the earth, blazing torches in her hands,
nor did she eat ambrosia or sip sweet nectar once
while grieving, or wash her skin clean. 5
0

When shining Dawn arose on the tenth day,
Hekate met her with torches in her own hands
and drew close, speaking these words:
“Queen Demeter, who brings seasons, bears
shining fruit,
which one of the heavenly gods or mortal folk
seized Persephone and grieved your spirit?
I heard her cry, but with my own eyes did not see
who did it. I am telling you the whole truth.”
Hekate asked, but the daughter of rich-haired
Rhea

did not wait to reply. Quickly she rushed away, 6
0
blazing torches in her hands, Hekate at her side.
They came to Helios, who watches gods and
mortals,
and stood before his horses. The heavenly
goddess said:
“Helios, respect me as a goddess, if ever before
with words or deeds I cheered your heart and
soul.

The girl I bore, a sweet blossom, a joy to see,

I heard her screams through the barren air
as if she was taken by force, but I did not see her.
Yet you gaze through the bright air with your rays
over the whole wide earth and sea: 7
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Tell me truly of my dear child, if you saw
who stole her away from me, against her will,
and is gone, what god or mortal man?"
She asked and Hyperion's son answered back:
"Queen Demeter, daughter of rich-haired Rhea,
you will know: I do greatly respect you and pity
your grief over your slim-ankled child. No other
god arranged it but cloud-gathering Zeus,
who gave her to his own brother Hades to be
called

his budding wife. He carried her off on his horses 8
0
into the misty darkness while she screamed
aloud.

But, Goddess, give up your strong grief; let go
of your infinite anger. Hades is not an unsuitable
son-in-law among the gods: Lord of the Many
Dead,
your own brother from the same seed. As for
honor,
he won the third share when the division was
made
and lives as king among those in his allotted
land."

After speaking, Helios called to his horses, who at
his shout
bore the swift chariot quickly like long-winged
birds.

But a grief more dread and more bitter came over
her. 90

Then, furious at Zeus who darkens clouds,
she withdrew from the assembly of gods and high
Olympos

and wandered the cities and rich fields of
humans,

disguising her form for a long time. Nor did any
man

or woman recognize her when they looked,
until she came to the house of thoughtful Keleos,
who then was ruler of incense-offering Eleusis.

She sat near the road, her heart sorrowing,
by Maiden Well where townswomen drew water,

an olive tree spreading shade above her; 100

she looked like an old woman born long ago,
without a child or gifts of garland-loving
Aphrodite,

like a nurse for the children of a righteous king
or a housekeeper in a king's echoing palace.

The daughters of Keleos, son of Eleusinos, saw
her

as they came to draw the well water and bring it
in bronze pitchers to their father's house.

Like four goddesses, they bloomed with youth:
Kallidike, Kleisidike, lovely Demo,

and Kallithoe, eldest of them all. 110

They did not know her, for mortals have trouble

seeing gods.

Flocking near her, their words flew out swiftly:

“Who are you and from where, old woman of elder folk?

Why do you stay far from the city and not draw near

the homes? There are women in the shady halls

the same age as you and those younger

who would treat you well both in word and deed.”

They asked her, and the queenly goddess answered:

“Dear children, whoever you are of womankind,

greetings. Since you ask, I will tell you my tale;

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it is right to tell you the truth:

Doso is my name, given by my lady mother.

I came from Crete upon the sea’s wide back,

not wanting to, but forced against my will,

stolen away by pirates. When they landed

their swift ship at Thorikos, the women

set foot on land all together, and the pirates

prepared dinner beside the ship’s stern cables.

But my spirit longed for no pleasant meal.

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Secretly hurrying through the darkened land

I fled my arrogant leaders, so they could not sell me,

an unbought slave, and enjoy my purchase price.

After wandering so, I came here, not knowing at all

what land this is or who lives here.

Yet may all those in Olympian homes
grant you true husbands and childbearing
as your parents wish: now pity me, girls,

[missing line]

dear children, tell me what man and wife's house
I might go to, and so work for them gladly

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at whatever tasks an old woman can do:

I could nurse a newborn babe in my arms
quite well, guard the house and make up
the master's bed within his well-built room,
and guide the women in all their work."

So the goddess said. Quickly the unwed girl,
Kallidike, Keleos' most beautiful daughter,
replied:

"Good mother, the gods' gifts and griefs by
necessity

we humans must endure—gods are much more
powerful.

I will tell you everything clearly and name

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the men who have great strength of honor here;

they are preeminent among the people and
protect

the city walls with counsels and straight
judgments.

They are wise Triptolemos, Diokles,

Polyxeinos, excellent Eumolpos,

Dolikhos, and our own heroic father—

wives of them all manage the houses.

Not a one of them would scorn your bearing

at first glance, or keep you from their house,
no: they will welcome you—you are godlike.

Please wait while we go to our father's house

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so we may ask our mother Metaneira
all of this straight through: she might urge you
to come to our house and not seek another.
Her only son is nursed within the well-built halls,
a son born late, prayed for, much cherished.
If you would rear him until he reaches a measure
of youth, any woman seeing you would envy you,
so high a reward would our mother give.”
She urged and the goddess nodded her head.

Then they proudly carried the bright jars filled
with water.

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Flying to their father's great house, they quickly
told
their mother just what they saw and heard. Right
away,
she bid them offer the woman a boundless wage.
Like deer or young heifers in spring's season
leaping through the meadow, sated with grazing,
holding up the folds of their flowing robes,
they darted down the hollow wagon trail, their
hair
shimmering over their shoulders like crocus in
bloom.

They came to the glorious goddess waiting

near the road and led her to their father's house.

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Demeter followed after, her heart sorrowing,
her head veiled. A dark-blue robe
trembled around the goddess's slender feet.
Quickly they came to the house of highborn
Keleos.

They walked across the porch to where their
mother
sat by a column that supported the strong roof,
holding her child, her new sprout, to her breast.
They ran
to her, but the goddess set foot on the threshold,
her head
touching the rafter, the doorway filled with divine
light.

Awe, reverence, and damp fear seized Metaneira. 1
9
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Rising, she offered the goddess her royal seat.
But Demeter, who brings seasons, bears shining
fruit,
did not wish to sit upon the radiant throne—
she waited silently, her lovely eyes cast down,
until careful, wise Iambe set up a stool
and cast over it a silvery fleece.
Then the goddess sat, holding her veil before her.
For a long time, grieving silently, she sat on the
stool,
greeting no one with word or gesture,

not laughing, not tasting food or drink. 2
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She sat, wasting with longing for her daughter,
until wise, careful Iambe jested with her.

With a slew of jokes, Iambe made the divine lady smile, laugh, and keep a gracious mood—
 Iambe who in later times also pleased her spirit.
 Metaneira gave her a cup of honey-sweet wine,
 but she shook her head, saying it was not right
 for her to drink red wine; Demeter bid her offer
 a drink of barley and water mixed with tender
 mint.

She gave the *kukeōn* drink to the goddess as²
 ordered:₁
₀

Queen Deo received it for the sake of her rite.

Metaneira, richly girded, spoke first:
 “Greetings, Lady—since I expect you are not
 lowborn,
 but noble. Your eyes reflect the dignity
 and the grace of kings who rule with justice.
 But the gods’ gifts and griefs we humans by
 necessity
 must endure, for the yoke lies on our neck.
 Since you have come here, what is mine will be at
 hand.

Nurse this child for me, whom the gods bestowed
 late born and unexpected; he is my dearest²
 desire.₂
₀

If you would rear him until he reaches a measure
 of youth, any woman seeing you would envy you,
 so high a reward would I give you.”

Demeter, richly crowned, replied to her:

“Greetings to you too, lady, and may the gods
 bless you.

Your son I will gladly embrace as you urge me;
I will rear him, and not, I expect, as a negligent
nurse,
nor will spells attack him or herb potions.
For I know a stronger charm than the herb
cutter;

I know a good safeguard from painful spells.” 2
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Speaking briefly, she gathered him to her
fragrant breast
with her immortal hands. And the mother
rejoiced.

Then the shining son of thoughtful Keleos,
Demophon, whom richly girded Metaneira bore,
she nursed in the great halls. He grew like a god,
not eating grain, nor sucking [mother’s milk].
[By day, Demeter] anointed him with ambrosia as
if god-born,
breathing sweetly on him, holding him to her
breast.

By night she buried him in the fire’s might like a
brand,

in secret from his own parents. They were 2
amazed 4
0

how fast he sprouted up; he was like the gods.

She would have made him unaging and immortal
had not his mother, richly girded Metaneira,
foolishly
kept watch all night from her fragrant room,
spying. She shrieked and struck her thighs,

fearing for her son, pain searing her mind.

And in her grief words flew out swiftly:

“My baby Demophon, the stranger buries you deep

in the fire, leaving me with grief and bitterness.”

She called out weeping and the heavenly goddess
heard. 2
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Furious at her, Demeter, crowned with grace,
with immortal hands snatched from the fire

the dear child, born to the royal house
unexpected,

and set him down on the floor. Her mind raging
terribly,

she chided richly girded Metaneira:

“Ignorant mortals, you have no sense to foresee
destiny approaching whether good or bad.

You in your foolishness have been incurably
harmed.

Let the gods’ oath, the Styx’s cruel water,
witness:

I would have made your dear child immortal 2
6
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and unaging forever and granted him undying
honor.

Now he cannot escape death or the death spirits.

But undying honor will always be his

because he lay on my knees and slept in my arms.

In time, as the anniversary of this day returns,

the sons of Eleusis will wage war and dread
battle

against one another each year on that day.

I am honored Demeter, the greatest source
of aid and joy for mortals and immortals.

Come, have all the people build me

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a great temple with an altar below the city's
steep walls, on the rising hill above Kallikhoron.
I myself will lay out the rites so that hereafter
you may appease my spirit by acting lawfully."

As she spoke, the goddess's form and stature
changed,
sloughing off old age, and all around breathed
beauty:

a bewitching scent emanated from her fragrant
robes,

light from the goddess's heavenly skin shone far,
her golden hair flowed over her shoulders,

and lightning flashes filled the finely crafted
house.

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She left the great hall. Metaneira's knees
buckled.

Silent a long time, she did not think at all
to pick up from the floor her only son.

But his sisters heard his pitiful cries,
and dashed from their richly spread beds. One
lifted

the child in her arms, cradling him to her breast,
another lit the fire, while another rushed on soft
feet

to rouse her mother from the fragrant room.

Gathering him up, they bathed the struggling

child

and held him lovingly, but his spirit was not
soothed:

far worse nurses and caretakers held him.

All night long, quaking with fear, they prayed
that the great goddess be gracious. When dawn
appeared

they told Keleos, whose rule stretched far,
all that Demeter, crowned with grace, had
commanded.

He then summoned the people from all around,
ordering them to make rich-haired Demeter
a splendid temple and altar on the rising hill.

They obeyed at once, heeded his words, and built

the temple, which grew as the deity had decreed.

When it was completed, they rested from toil
and left to return home. But golden Demeter
sat there, far away from all the blessed ones,
waiting, wasting away with longing for her
daughter.

She made that a most dreadful and bitter year
for people on the land that feeds them, and the
earth

sprouted no seed: Demeter, richly crowned,
concealed it.

Oxen dragged the curved plows in vain through
fields

and the white barley fell fruitless to the earth.

The cruel famine would have destroyed the whole

race 1
0

of speaking folk, and deprived those in Olympos
of the splendid honor of gifts and sacrifices,
had Zeus not noticed, and devised a plan.
First he roused golden-winged Iris to summon
rich-haired Demeter—her form now in full beauty.
Zeus spoke and Iris obeyed the storm-cloud son
of Kronos, darting down with flying feet.
She came to the city of incense-offering Eleusis
and found Demeter darkly robed in the temple.

Iris urged her with swift words: 3
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“Demeter, Father Zeus—who knows all—
summons you
to join the race of gods who live forever.
Come, do not let my words from Zeus be barren.”
Iris pleaded, but Demeter’s spirit was not
persuaded.

Then the father sent out one after another
all the blessed immortal gods. In succession
they called for her, offering many beautiful gifts,
and whatever honors she might choose among
the gods.

But no one could persuade her heart or mind;
raging in spirit, she firmly spurned their words. 3
3
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She said that never on fragrant Olympos
would she set foot, nor send up the earth’s fruit,
until she saw with her own eyes her bright-eyed
daughter.

After far-seeing, thundering Zeus heard that,
he sent Hermes with his golden wand to Erebos
to cajole Hades with gentle words
that he might lead holy Persephone out of the
misty
darkness to the light among gods, so her mother
could see with her own eyes and give up her
anger.

Hermes obeyed; at once into the earth's hidden³
places⁴
⁰

he plunged down quickly, leaving Olympos.
He came upon Lord Hades in his house
sitting in bed with his revered wife,
still unwilling and longing for her mother. But
Demeter
had devised a plan against the blessed gods'
deeds.

Standing near, the mighty Slayer of Argos said:
"Black-haired Hades, Lord of the Dead,
Zeus the father ordered me to lead noble
Persephone
out of Erebos to be among us, so that her mother

might see her and give up her anger and dread³
⁵
⁰

wrath against the gods. Demeter devised a plan
to destroy the fleeting race of earth-born humans,
burying all seed in the earth, destroying
the gods' honors. She rages terribly, and does not
mingle
with the gods: she sits far away in her fragrant
temple,

keeping to the rugged city of Eleusis.”

So he explained. Hades, Lord of the Dead, smiled with his brows, and obeyed the command of King Zeus.

Quickly he called for thoughtful Persephone:

“Persephone, go to your darkly robed mother,

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keeping your temper and spirit gentle.

Do not be so much unhappier than others.

I will not be an unsuitable husband for you among the gods, Father Zeus’ own brother. Here you will rule over all who live and move, you will have the greatest honors among immortals,

and you will punish forever those who do wrong, who do not appease your temper with sacrifices, enacting proper rites and offering gifts.”

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So he said. Thoughtful Persephone rejoiced

and quickly leapt up in joy. But he gave her a honey-sweet pomegranate seed to eat, secretly slipping it to her, so she would not remain

with holy, dark-robed Demeter forever.

Hades, Lord of the Many Dead, harnessed his immortal horses to the golden chariot.

She climbed into the chariot with strong Hermes, who took the reins and the whip in his hands, and raced off through the great hall. Eagerly they flew

and quickly they completed the long journey.

3

No sea or river, no grassy glens
or mountain peaks held them back: high above,
the immortal horses sliced through the wide air.

Hermes drove them to Demeter, richly crowned,
who waited by her fragrant temple. Demeter saw
her
and dashed like a maenad down a wooded
mountain.

When Persephone [saw] her mother's [lovely
eyes,]
she leapt down [from the chariot] and ran,
[flinging her arms around her mother's neck.]

[Still holding her dear daughter, Demeter at
once] ³₉
0

[suspected some trick; her heart feared terribly.]
Ending [her embrace, she quickly questioned:]
"My child, you didn't [eat] any food [while you
were down]
[below]? Speak out, [don't hide, so that we may
both know.]

If you did not, having come from [hateful Hades,]
you may live with me and your father,
[Kronos' storm-cloud son,] honored by all [the
gods.]

But if you did, flying back [into earth's hidden
places,]
you will live there a third part [of each year,]

but two seasons with me and the [other gods.] ⁴
0
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When earth sprouts with every kind of fragrant
flower in spring, out of the misty darkness
you will rise again, a great marvel for gods and
mortal folk.

What lure did the mighty Lord of the Dead use to
trick you?"

Beautiful Persephone answered her in turn:

"Indeed I will tell you, Mother, the whole truth.

When Hermes, the swift runner, came to me
from my father, son of Kronos, and the other gods
to bring me from Erebos, so you could see me

and give up anger and dread wrath against the
gods,

I leapt with joy, but secretly Kronos' other son
put into me a pomegranate seed, honey-sweet
food,

compelling me by force to eat, most unwillingly.

I will tell you how cunning Hades stole me away,
bringing me from my father to the hidden places
deep in the earth, and recount everything you
ask.

All of us were playing in a charming meadow:

Leukippa, Phaino, Elektra, Iantha,

Melita, Iakha, Rhodeia, Kallirhoa,

Melobosis, Tukhe, blossoming Okuroa,

Khryseis, Ianeira, Akasta, Admeta,

Rhodopa, Pluto, charming Kalypso,

Styx, Ourania, lovely Galaxaura,

battle-rousing Athena and arrow-flinging Artemis.

We played and picked beautiful flowers:

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delicate crocus mixed with iris and hyacinth,
rosebuds and lilies, marvelous to see,
and the narcissus, which the wide earth grew like
a crocus.

When I picked it in delight, the earth gave way
from beneath,

and the mighty Lord of the Many Dead sprang⁴
out.₃
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Hades dragged me most unwilling under the
earth

in his golden chariot; I shouted and screamed
aloud.

In all this, though I grieve, I tell the whole truth.”

Then all day long the two goddesses were of one
mind,

greatly cheering each other’s heart and soul;
as they embraced, their hearts abandoned grief.

They received and gave joys one to the other.

Hekate, veiled in light, came near them

and warmly embraced holy Demeter’s daughter.

From then on Hekate was her attendant and⁴
companion.₄
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Far-seeing, thundering Zeus sent down rich-
haired Rhea,

the mother of darkly robed Demeter, to bring
her daughter among the race of gods, for the
honors—

whatever she might choose—that Zeus had
promised.

He nodded to Rhea that the girl stay in misty
darkness

for one-third share of the revolving year,
but two-thirds with her mother and other
immortals.

The goddess Rhea obeyed the order from Zeus.
Quickly stepping down from the peaks of
Olympos,

she came to the Rarian plain: life-giving udder of
land $\frac{4}{5}0$

once fertile, now barren, it stood idle,
stripped of leaves. The land hid the white barley
through graceful Demeter's cunning. Soon,
with the flourishing spring, the grain would grow
tall again, and in the plain, fat furrows
would be heavy with grain to be tied into sheaves.
There, Rhea first stepped down from the barren
air.

Mother and daughter saw each other gladly,
hearts rejoicing.

Rhea, veiled in light, said to Demeter:

"My child, far-seeing, thundering Zeus summons
you $\frac{4}{6}0$

to walk among the race of gods, for the honors—
whatever you might choose—he has promised.
He nodded to you that the girl stay in misty
darkness

for one-third share of the revolving year,
but two-thirds with you and other immortals.
Zeus said this was to happen and nodded his
head.

But come, my daughter, obey. Do not forever rage
excessively against the storm-cloud son of

Kronos.

Quickly grow life-giving fruit for humankind.”

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Rhea urged and Demeter, richly crowned, obeyed. 7

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Quickly she sent fruit shooting up from the fertile ground.

All the wide earth was heavy with leaves
and blossoms. Demeter revealed her sacred rites
to the kings who give justice, to Triptolemos,
horse-driving Diokles, powerful Eumolpos,
and leader Keleos, teaching her Mysteries to
them all,

[to Triptolemos, Polyxeinos, and Diokles,]
sacred things not to be transgressed, asked
about,

or uttered: great awe of the gods stops the voice.

Blest are earth-bound mortals who have seen 4
these rites, 8
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but the uninitiate, who has no share in them,
never has the same lot when dead in misty
darkness.

After divine Demeter laid out her rites,
they left for Olympos to join the assembled gods;
there they live with Zeus who delights in thunder,
revered and feared. Whoever Demeter and
Persephone

dearly love of earth-bound mortals is greatly blest

—

they send Ploutos to that person’s great house
and Ploutos gives wealth to mortal folk.

Come, goddesses who abide in incense-offering 4

Eleusis,

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Paros, surrounded by sea, and craggy Antron—
Queen Deo, who brings seasons, bears shining
fruit,
and your most beautiful daughter Persephone—
gladly grant a welcome livelihood for my song.
But I will remember you and the rest of the song.

3. HYMN TO APOLLO

I will remember and not forget far-shooting
Apollo.

Gods tremble as he approaches the home of Zeus:
All rise from their seats as he draws near
when he stretches his gleaming bow.

Only Leto stays beside Zeus who delights in
thunder.

She unstrings Apollo's bow, closes his quiver,
lifts the bow from his mighty shoulders,
hangs it from a golden peg on a pillar near his
father,
leads him to his throne and bids him sit.

His father hands him nectar in a golden cup, 1
0
welcoming his dear son—then the other gods
return to their seats. Queen Leto rejoices
that she bore a strong son, an archer.

Rejoice, blessed Leto, since you bore glorious
children—

Lord Apollo and Artemis who rains arrows,
Artemis in Ortygia and Apollo in rocky Delos—
bracing yourself against the great hill Kynthos
near a date palm by the streams of Inopos.

How to praise you, celebrated in so many hymns?

Phoibos, the range of songs for you spreads over 2
0

all the islands and lands that feed calves.
All high places please you, from the mountain
headlands, to the rivers flowing seaward,
and the rugged banks sloping to the sea and
harbor.

Shall I sing of when Leto first leaned on Mount
Kynthos

in Delos, the rocky island encircled by sea,
and gave birth to you, a joy for mortals? With
whistling

winds, dark waves encroach the dry land on every
side.

Starting from Delos, you rule over all mortals.

Crete, which holds so many, then the land of
Athens, 3
0

the isle of Aigina and Euboea famous for ships,
Aigai, Eiresiai, and Peparethos near the sea,
Thracian Mount Athos, the towering peaks of
Pelion,

then Samothrace and Ida's mountain range,
Skyros, Phokaia, the sheer summit of Autokane,
well-managed Imbros, inhospitable Lemnos,
holy Lesbos, home to Makar, son of Aiolos,
and Chios, most fruitful of islands that lie in the
sea,

rugged Mimas, the high crown of Korykos,

dazzling Klaros, steep Mount Aisagee, 4
0

watery Samos, lofty peak of Mykale,
Miletos, and Kos, the city of Meropians,
high Knidos and windy Karpathos,
Naxos, Paros, and rocky Rheneia—

Leto searched, while in labor with the skillful
Archer,
all these lands to find one willing to house her
son.
But each place quaked with fear and not one
dared
to accept Phoibos, for all their fertile soil,
not until Queen Leto set foot on Delos.

Leto's words flew out swiftly:

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"Delos, if only you wanted to be my son's home
and to establish Phoibos Apollo's rich temple
here!

No one else will touch you—as you notice—
you will not be rich, I think, in cattle or sheep,
and you will not bear fruit nor grow many plants.
If you had the temple of Apollo, who works from
afar,
then everyone gathering here would sacrifice
hundreds
of bulls—an endless scent of offerings smoking up
—

and you, whose land is not rich, would receive
from the hands of strangers food for all your
people."

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When Leto finished, Delos greeted her:

"Most honorable Leto, daughter of great Koios,
I would gladly welcome the birth of the far-
shooting Lord.

It is terribly true that I now seem hateful to men,
while then I would become greatly honored.
Though I tremble to speak, I will not hide it from

you:

Leto, they say Apollo will be extremely reckless
and rule mightily over the immortal gods
and mortal men on the wheat-growing earth.

In my mind and spirit I have a terror, a fear 7
0

that when he first sees the light of the sun,
Apollo might dishonor this island—since I am too
rocky—

trampling it, he will thrust me into the briny sea.
Then crashing great waves will pile over my head
and he will go to another land that might please
you,

Leto, there to establish his temple and sacred
grove.

Octopi will make their bed on me and dark seals
will make their home, undisturbed by people.

But, Goddess, if you dare swear a solemn oath

that Apollo will build his first beautiful temple 8
0

here, as an oracle for people, then later he can
[build]

among all other folk, since surely he will be
famous.”

After Delos spoke, Leto swore the gods’ greatest
oath:

“Know this, Earth, wide Heaven, by the cascading
water

of the Styx (the greatest and most terrible oath
that the blessed gods swear): Apollo will forever
have his fragrant altar and precinct on this
island.

He will honor you far above all others.”

When Leto had finished swearing the oath,
Delos welcomed the birth of the far-shooting
Lord. 9
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For nine days and nine nights, Leto was pierced
by unexpected labor pains. All the goddesses,
the best ones, were with her: Dione, Rhea,
the tracker Themis, roaring Amphitrite,
and all the rest, except for white-armed Hera,
who sat in the great hall of Zeus, the cloud-
wrangler.

Only Eileithyia, goddess of childbirth, had not
heard:

she sat on Mount Olympos under golden clouds,
through the cunning of white-armed Hera, who

distracted her out of jealousy that fair-haired Leto
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was about to bear a perfect, powerful son.

So the goddesses sent Iris from the well-built
temple

to retrieve Eileithyia, swearing to give her
a necklace nine cubits long, strung with gold
thread.

They urged Iris to summon her away from Hera,
before Hera could dissuade Eileithyia from
coming.

Swift, wind-footed Iris ran when she heard this,
quickly traversing the whole distance between.

As she reached the seat of the gods, steep
Olympos,

Iris quickly called for Eileithyia to come to the
door 1
1
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from the great hall, her words flying out
as all the other Olympian goddesses had urged.
Iris did persuade Eileithyia's own heart,
and so the two goddesses flew like sky doves.
When the labor goddess landed on Delos,
labor seized Leto; she strove to give birth.
She threw her arms around a date palm tree,
knees sinking in the soft meadow, and Earth
smiled.
The baby leapt toward the light and all the
goddesses

cried aloud. Lord Phoibos, the goddesses bathed¹
you₂
₀

in holy, pure water; they swaddled you in a
delicate,
new white cloth, fastened with a golden band.
His mother did not nurse Apollo of the golden
blade;

Themis, instead, offered nectar and sweet
ambrosia

in her immortal hands. Then Leto rejoiced
that she bore a strong son, an archer.

But when you, Phoibos, devoured the immortal
food,
the golden cords could not hold as you struggled,
the ties no longer hindered you, all the ropes fell
free.

₁
At once Phoibos Apollo addressed the immortals: ₃
₀

"The lyre and the curved bow shall ever be dear
to me,
and I will proclaim to humans the unerring will of

Zeus.”

With that, unshorn Phoibos, who strikes from
afar,

strode on the earth’s broad paths and all the
immortal

goddesses were astounded. Then Delos
everywhere

grew heavy with gold, beholding Zeus and Leto’s
child,

joyous that the god chose her as his home,
that out of all islands and lands, he loved her
more.

Like a hilltop with forest flowers, Delos
blossomed with gold.

Silverbow Apollo, Lord who strikes from afar, 1
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you walked all over rocky Mount Kynthos,
then you roamed the other islands, among all
men.

Your temples and sacred groves are many.

All high places, the mountain headlands,
and rivers flowing seaward please you.

Yet your heart, Phoibos, most delights in Delos
where the Ionians, in trailing robes, gather
with their children and respected wives.

They please you when they hold their contests,

remembering you with boxing matches, dance, 1
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and song.

One would say they are immortal, forever
unaging,

if one came upon them, thronged together.

Seeing the grace of them all, one would delight
at the sight of men and well-dressed women,
swift ships and the Ionians' many possessions.
And the greatest marvel, whose fame will never
die:

the Delian girls, servants of the god of a hundred
arrows.

They begin a hymn celebrating Apollo in song,
Leto next and Artemis, who rains arrows,

and then, remembering the men and women of
old, 1
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they sing an epic tale—they enchant the people.
They know how to mimic the sounds of all folk
and the rattling of castanets; each person would
hear
his own voice singing, so well do they craft the
song.

Now may Apollo, along with Artemis, be gracious,
and all you girls fare well. Remember me ever
after,

whenever some man of the earth, a stranger
who has suffered much, comes here and asks:

“Girls, which man's song is sweetest to you
of those landing here, and who delights you
most?” 1
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Then you all answer so well about us:

“The blind man, who lives in rugged Chios,
whose songs all remain the best forever.”

We will carry your fame so far over the earth
as we travel about the crowded cities of people.

They will be persuaded, since it is the truth.
Yet, I will not stop celebrating the skillful Archer,
Silverbow Apollo, son of fair-haired Leto.
Lord, Lykia and lovely Maionia are yours,

and Miletos, charming city by the sea.

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And you most powerfully rule the island Delos.

Strumming the hollow lyre, Leto's glorious son
roams toward rocky Pytho, wearing clothes
fragrant

and divine. The lyre has a haunting, sweet sound
under the golden pick when he plays.

Swift as thought, he leaves earth for Zeus'
Olympian house among the assembly of gods;
at once the gods heed the lyre and song.

The Muses respond as one, their rich voices

singing the gods' undying gifts and the sufferings

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that the deathless gods inflict on human folk
who live witless and helpless, unable to find
a cure for death or defense against old age.

Then the rich-haired Graces, gracious Horai,
Harmonia, Hebe, and Zeus' daughter, Aphrodite,
all dance together joining hands at their wrists.

Among them sings a goddess neither ugly nor
short,

but statuesque, a stunning beauty to behold:

Artemis, who rains arrows, the sister of Apollo.

Among them, too, play Ares and sharp-eyed
Hermes.

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As Phoibos Apollo plays the lyre, stepping high
and fine, radiance blazes around him,
the dancers' feet flashing from under fine-spun
robes.

Golden-haired Leto and wise Zeus
greatly rejoice in their hearts to watch
their dear son playing among the immortal gods.
How to praise you, celebrated in so many hymns?

Shall I sing about you as wooer and lover:
How you and godlike Iskhos, son of Elatos the
horseman,

rivaled in wooing Koronis, daughter of Azan? 2
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Or you with rivals Phorbas, son of Triops, or
Ereutheus?

Or with Leukippos and Leukippos' lady, Daphne,
one on foot, the other riding? He did not fall short
of Triops.

Shall I sing of how you, Apollo who strikes from
afar,
searched the earth for a place of prophecy for
mortals?

First you traveled from Olympos to Pieria,
past sandy Lekton and the Ainianes,
past the land of the Perraiboi. You came swiftly
to Iolkos, and Kenaion in Euboea, famous for
ships.

As you stood on the Lelanton plain, the place 2
2
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did not please you for your temple and grove.
Crossing the Euripos, Apollo who strikes from
afar,

you climbed the divine, green mountain. Quickly,
you left there for Mykalessos and grassy
Teumessos.

Then you came to Thebes, a place covered in
forest—

for no mortals yet made their home in holy
Thebes,

there were no paths or roads yet in the wheat
plain,

and Thebes was still held by woods.

Going further, Apollo who strikes from afar,

you reached Onchestos, Poseidon's luminous
grove. 2
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There, in a ritual to Poseidon, a newly tamed colt
breathes heavily, distressed from pulling a fine
chariot,

then his good driver leaps from the car to the
path.

Free of control, the horses rattle their empty
vessels.

If the chariots are shattered in the grove,
people tend the horses, but leave the chariots
lying.

Thus the ritual was born: they pray to Poseidon,
and Moira will guard the god's chariot.

You reached that grove later, Apollo who strikes
from afar.

Then you encountered the fine-flowing Kephisos, 2
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which rushes out, its waters pouring from Lilaia.
Walking through it and Okaleia of many towers,
you,
who work from afar, happened upon grassy
Haliartos.

Finally, you reached Telphusa, a pristine place
to establish your temple and grove.
Standing very close, you told her:
“Telphusa, I intend to build a most beautiful
temple
right here as a place of prophecy for mortals,
who will always offer me perfect bulls by the
hundred.

People living in the rocky Peloponnesus, in $\frac{2}{5}$
Europe, 0

and in islands encircled by sea will make
offerings
when seeking an oracle. To all of them, I will
prophecy
unerring counsel, declaring oracles in my rich
temple.”

After speaking, Phoibos Apollo set the
foundations

wide and extremely long. When Telphusa saw
that,

her heart filled with anger and she said:

“Lord Apollo who works from afar, I will set out
an idea,

since you intend to build a most beautiful temple
right here as a place of prophecy for mortals,
who will always offer you perfect bulls by the $\frac{2}{5}$
hundred. 6

I will spell it out for you—toss it into your mind:
 the clatter of prancing horses will always bother
 you
 and the mules being watered from my sacred
 springs.

Here, someone of humanfolk will want to ogle
 finely crafted chariots and the stamping of fast
 horses

more than your great temple and the many goods
 inside.

But if you might be persuaded—since you are
 mightier

and better than I, Lord, with the greatest
 strength—

build in Krisa under the cleft of Parnassus.

In Krisa, no fancy chariots will rumble,

no swift-footed horses will stamp around your
 fine altars.

Those famous tribes of humans may bring you
 gifts

as ‘Iepaeon’ the Healer, and you will enjoy
 accepting

the lovely sacred objects from people around
 there.”

Thus she convinced the Far-shooter, so Telphusa
 herself

might get the glory on earth, instead of the Far-
 shooter.

So, going farther, Apollo who strikes from afar,
 you came to the city of insolent Phlegyan men,

who disregard Zeus, living on the land
in a wooded valley near the Kephisian lake.

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You kept going quickly, rushing to the ridge,
until you came to Krisa under snowy Parnassus,
a west-facing crag; a cliff juts out above
and a deep, rugged valley runs below.
Lord Phoibos Apollo determined to build
his lovely temple on that spot, and said:
“I intend to build a most beautiful temple
right here as a place of prophecy for mortals,
who will always offer me perfect bulls by the
hundred.

People living in the rocky Peloponnesus, in
Europe,

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and in islands encircled by sea will make
offerings
when seeking an oracle. To all of them, I will
prophecy
unerring counsel, declaring oracles in my rich
temple.”

After speaking, Phoibos Apollo set the
foundations

wide and continuous. The sons of Erginos,
Trophonius and Agamedes, dear to the immortal
gods,

placed a marble threshold on the foundations.

The countless human race crafted a temple
with polished stones, a temple to be a song
forever.

A lovely stream runs near, where the son of Zeus 3
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used his mighty bow to kill a she-dragon,
a great, fat, wild monster, who persisted in
wreaking
much evil on men—on the men themselves
and often on their rangy sheep—a very bloody
bane.

She once accepted Typhon, terrible and cruel,
from gold-enthroned Hera, nursing that man-
killer

whom Hera bore in her fury at Father Zeus
because the glorious son of Kronos bore Athena
from his head. At that, Queen Hera was enraged

and spoke among the assembled gods: 3
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“Hear me, all you gods and goddesses,
how cloud-wrangling Zeus begins to dishonor me
first, although he made me his trustworthy wife.
Now apart from me, he bore owl-eyed Athena—
whom he sets above all the blessed gods—
but he begot my lame-footed son Hephaistos,
whom I bore, a weakling among all the gods.
I grabbed him, hurled him into the wide sea,
but Thetis, silver-footed daughter of Nereus,

welcomed him and tended him among her own 3
sisters— 2
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I wish she would favor the blessed gods some
other way.

Cruel, cunning trickster, what else will you plan?

How dare you bear owl-eyed Athena on your own?

Could not I have borne her? I was still called yours

among the immortals who live in wide heaven.

Watch out that I do not devise some evil in return.

I will scheme to bear a child who will rule the immortal gods.

I, at least, will not shame our holy marriage,

but I will not approach your bed. Away, far away

from you, I will still count among the undying gods!"

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In great fury, she stormed from the gods.

Eyes dark and wide as a cow's, Queen Hera prayed

and with down-turned palm struck the earth:

"Now hear me Earth and wide Heaven above,
and Titans, gods beneath the earth, dwelling
around

great Tartaros, from whom men and gods derive:
all hear me and grant me a child apart from Zeus,
in no way weaker in strength than he, a child
greater

than Zeus by as much as Zeus is greater than
Kronos."

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And she struck the earth with her massive hand.

Then life-bearing Earth shifted; Hera rejoiced
in the sight, believing her prayer would be
fulfilled.

From that moment on for a complete year

Hera never came to the bed of cunning Zeus,

nor ever to her finely worked throne as before,
where she used to plan complicated councils with
him.

Cow-eyed Queen Hera stayed in her temple
that echoed with prayers, enjoying sacred sheep.
When the months and days were completed,

the year revolved again and the seasons came, 3
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Hera bore Typhon, unlike a god or a human,
clever, awful and cruel, a bane for mortal folk.
At once, cow-eyed Queen Hera brought
evil to evil and the she-dragon welcomed him—
Typhon did much harm to the glorious human
race.

Whoever met the she-dragon died that day,
until Lord Apollo, who works from afar,
shot her with a piercing arrow—she lay down,
shattered
with brutal pain, wheezing heavily, thrashing on
the ground.

Her divine cry became unspeakable—writhing 3
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without ceasing amid the woods, she left her life
breathing out her blood-red spirit. Phoibos Apollo
boasted:

“Now rot here on the man-feeding earth.
You will not be an evil plague for living mortals,
who eat the fruit of the fertile earth,
who here will offer perfect bulls by the hundred.
Neither cruel Typhon nor infamous Chimera

will help you ward off death, but on this spot
the black earth and rays of the sun will rot you.”

As he boasted over her, darkness covered her³
eyes.⁷
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There she rotted under the holy strength of
Helios—

which is why that place is now called “Pytho” and
men

call Apollo the Pythian Lord because right there
the strength of piercing Helios “rotted” the
monster.

Then Phoibos Apollo knew in his heart
that the sweet-flowing spring had tricked him—
at once he stormed off, furious with Telphusa.

Looming over her, Apollo said:

“Telphusa, you did not expect to keep this lovely
place

pouring your fluid waters after deceiving me.³
⁸
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My glory will hold sway here, and not yours
alone.”

Then Lord Apollo who works from afar heaved a
crag

on top of her, burying her spring with a shower of
stones.

He built an altar in the sacred grove
close by the once sweet-flowing stream,
where everyone prayed to Apollo as “Telphusian”
because he despoiled the waters of holy Telphusa.

After that, Phoibos Apollo considered in his heart

which men he might bring in as priests

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who would be his servants in rocky Pytho.

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While pondering this, he noticed a swift ship
on the wine-dark sea. Many good men were
aboard:

Cretans from Minoan Knossos, who perform
sacrifices

for the Gold-bladed Lord and announce
prophecies

from Phoibos Apollo, whenever he delivers an
oracle

from the laurel tree in the hollow under Mount
Parnassus.

They were sailing, in their dark ship, to sandy
Pylos

to do business and trade with the Pylians.

In the form of a dolphin, Phoibos Apollo

joined them at sea, leaping aboard their swift
ship

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and lying there—a huge and terrible monster.

When any of the sailors pondered, trying to
understand,

Apollo tossed him all about, shaking the ship's
timbers.

He lay in silence on the ship and they were
afraid.

The sailors did not loosen the hollow ship's
rigging,

nor ease the sail of their blue-prowed ship.

The sail remained taut with oxhide ropes,

holding the ship to its course. A strong south

wind rushed
the swift ship along. First, they passed Cape
Malea.

Then, along the Laconian coast, they reached

the land of the joy-giving sun, Cape Tainaron
ringed by sea, where the woolly sheep of Lord
Helios

always graze, dwelling in their delightful land.

They wished to put the ship ashore there,
disembark

to understand the great marvel and see if the
monster

would remain on the deck of the hollow ship

or if he would dart away into a salty swell, rich
with fish.

But the well-built ship did not obey its steering
oars.

With the fertile Peloponnesus to the right, it
pushed on—

with his breath, Lord Apollo who works from afar

easily guided the ship, which kept sailing along
its route

passing Arena, beautiful Argyphea and Thryon,

the path of Alpheos, and well-placed Aepy,

and sandy Pylos with all its people,

passing Cruni, Chalcis, Dyme,

and shining Elis where the Epeoi rule.

As the ship headed for Phera, running with Zeus'
wind,

Ithaca's steep mountain appeared from the

clouds,
then Dulichium, Same, and woody Zacynthus.

But when it had passed the entire western
Peloponnesus

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and the long gulf toward Krisa appeared,
cutting off, lengthwise, the fertile peninsula,
then Zeus ordered a clear, strong west wind
blasting from the sky, setting the ship
to sail full speed over the sea's briny water.
Once again they sailed toward dawn and the sun,
led by Lord Apollo, the son of Zeus.

They reached vine-laden Krisa, seen from afar,
to the beach, where the seafaring ship brushed
the sand.

Lord Apollo who works from afar leapt from the
vessel,

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resembling a star (in midday!)—a shower of
sparks

burst from him and the fire stretched to heaven.

Descending to the inner shrine, among precious
tripods,

he kindled a blaze, his arrows carrying the flame.

He crowned all Krisa with fire. The Krisan wives
and daughters cried out under Apollo's blast,
for he cast great fear into each of them.

He flew back to the ship, swift as thought,
resembling a strong, vigorous man in his prime,

with his hair flowing over his wide shoulders.

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His words winged their way to the Cretans:

“Strangers, who are you? From what land do you sail?

Do you have some business, or are you idly wandering like pirates on the sea, who roam risking their lives, bringing trouble to foreign lands?

Why do you sit grieving, not going ashore or stowing the gear of your dark ship?

That is the custom among enterprising men on a dark ship when they come from the sea

to dry land. Weary with labor, the desire

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for sweet food immediately seizes their minds.”

His words set courage in their breasts.

The leader of the Cretans faced him:

“Stranger—though you are nothing like mortals in body and stature, but like the deathless gods—be healthy and rejoice; may the gods grant you wealth.

But now tell me truly so that I may know:

What country and land is this? What men live here?

With a different plan, we were sailing the great sea

to Pylos from Crete, which we declare our
birthplace.

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Instead, we went here on our ship, in no way willing

for this journey on other paths; we long for home.

Some immortal led us here against our will.”

Apollo, who works from afar, answered:
“Strangers, who once lived by wooded Knossos,
now, no longer will you return home,
each to his beloved city, lovely homes
and dear wives. Here, you will care for
my rich temple honored by many people.

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I am the son of Zeus; I declare I am Apollo.

I led you here over the great depth of the sea,
intending no evil. You will maintain
my rich temple so much honored by all people,
and you will know the plans of the gods.
By their will, you will be honored always, all your
days.

Now come, quickly obey my command:
Drop the sail, release the oxhide ropes,
and haul your swift ship onto dry land—
take goods and gear out of the well-balanced
ship.

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Then make an altar at the seashore,
kindle a fire on it and offer up white barley.
Then stand close around the altar and pray—
because I first leapt onto your swift ship as a
dolphin
out of the misty sea, pray to me as Delphinios,
the Dolphin, and the altar will be Delphinian
and will always be seen clearly from afar.
Next, eat beside your swift, dark ship
and pour libations to the blessed Olympian gods.
When you have satisfied the desire for sweet

food,
come with me at once, and sing a paeon until you⁵
reach⁰
the place where you will keep my rich temple.”
So he spoke. They listened carefully and obeyed.

They dropped the sail right away, released the
ropes,
lowered the mast to the mast-rest by the stays,
and landed on the shore of the bay.
They hauled the ship from the water to dry land,
high on the sand, and jammed in the long props.
Then they made an altar on the seashore;
kindling a fire and offering up white barley,

they prayed, as he bid, standing around the altar.⁵
¹
⁰

Afterward, they ate dinner by the swift black ship
and poured libations to the blessed Olympian
gods.

When they quenched their desire for food and
drink,

they went with the son of Zeus, Lord Apollo
who, stepping high and fine, sweetly played the
lyre.

The Cretans followed him to Pytho, keeping the
beat

and singing a paeon to the healer god
like the paeon singers in Crete, and those whom
the divine Muse fills with honey-voiced song.

They danced, unwearied, up to the ridge, soon⁵
reaching²

Parnassus and the beautiful place where Apollo
intended the Cretans to live honored by many
people.

He showed them his holy inner shrine and rich
temple.

Now, their courage arose within their breasts
and the Cretan leader faced Apollo:

“O Lord, since you brought us far away
from our dear ones and fatherland—as it pleased
you—

now, how will we live? We urge you to consider.

This land is not good for vineyards or pastures;

how can we live well and serve other people?”

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Apollo, son of Zeus, smiled at them:

“Foolish human beings, always suffering,
who wish for grief, hard work and trouble in
mind:

I will put a comforting word in your heart.

Each of you could hold a knife in your right hand
to kill sheep nonstop—they will be that plentiful,
so many will the glorious human race bring me.

Guard my temple, welcome the people
gathering here, under my direction above all

[missing line]

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But should there be any rash word or deed,

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the arrogant violence customary among mortals,
then other men will become your masters,
forever subduing you under their force.

All has been told to you; guard it in your heart.”

Son of Zeus and Leto, now farewell—
but I will remember you and the rest of the song.

4. HYMN TO HERMES

Muse, sing of Hermes, son of Zeus and Maia,
Guardian of Mount Kyllene and Arcadia, rich in
flocks,

Luck-bringing messenger of gods, whom Maia
bore

when the fair-haired nymph joined in love with
Zeus.

Shunning the crowd of blessed gods, the revered
goddess

lived in the shady cave where the son of Kronos
used to lie with her in the dark of night
(while sweet sleep held white-armed Hera)
unnoticed by immortal gods and mortal men.

When great Zeus accomplished his goal, 1
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the tenth lunar month was fixed in heaven
and illuminated a work worth noticing:

Maia bore a wily child with a seductive mind—
a robber, cattle rustler, guide of dreams,
who stands watch by night, guardian at the gate,
who would soon reveal glorious deeds among
immortal gods.

Born at dawn, at midday he played the lyre,
at dusk he stole the cattle of Apollo the skillful
Archer,

on that fourth day of the month Queen Maia bore
him.

When he leapt from his mother's immortal womb, 2
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he did not lie long in his holy cradle,
but sprang up to search for Apollo's cattle,
out over the threshold of the high-arching cave.
There he found a tortoise and won immense
wealth:

Hermes first made the tortoise a singer.
Feeding on the rich grasses by the house,
light-footed, she chanced upon him
at the door. The luck-bringing son of Zeus
gazed at her, laughed and said:

"A lucky omen for me, not bad! 3
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Hello, pleasing sight, lovely lady-friend at the
feast,
heartbeat of the dance! Where did you get that
pretty toy,
that speckled shell of yours, dear mountain
tortoise?

I'll bring you in and you'll do me good
and to your benefit, although mine first.
Better to stay in, as it's dangerous out there.
You'll ward off painful spells while alive,
but if you should die, you'll sing most beautifully."
At once he picked her up in his hands

and carried the lovely toy into the house. 4
0

Then, flipping her over, with an iron carving knife
he scooped out the mountain tortoise's marrow.
As when swift thought pierces the chest
of a man haunted by crowded cares
or when sparks flash from a man's eyes,

so soon glorious Hermes devised word and deed.
Cutting reed stalks to measure, he fastened them
by piercing through the back of the tortoise shell.
His mind intent, he stretched cowhide around the
front,

inserted two arms, joined them with a crossbar, 5
and strung seven harmonious strings of sheep- 0
gut.

When he finished, he held the lovely toy
and tried each strain with the pick,
her sound haunting under his touch.

Like young men provoking each other at feasts,
the god sang along beautifully with the lyre,
improvising tales of the amorous love talk
between Kronos' divine son and Maia in fine
sandals:

Hermes celebrated in song his own famous
conception.

And he honored Maia's handmaids and bright 6
house, 0
the tripods and abundant cauldrons inside.

Yet while he sang, his heart desired other things.

Then Hermes placed the hollow lyre
into his holy cradle. Craving meat, he sprang
from the fragrant great hall to a promontory,
thinking through utter trickery in his mind
as thieves plot in the black of night.

At that moment, Helios, with chariot and horses,
was setting beneath the earth toward Ocean.

Hermes sped toward the shady mountains of 7
Pieria 0

where the blessed gods kept their divine cattle,

who grazed the pleasant overgrown meadows.
 Maia's son, the keen-eyed Slayer of Argos,
 stole fifty from the herd of loud-bellowing cattle.
 He drove the wandering cows through a sandy
 place,
 turning their tracks backward. Using a skillful
 trick,
 he reversed their hooves, making the front
 behind
 and the hind in front, while he faced forward.
 On the sand by the sea, he wove wicker sandals,
 amazing things, unheard of and unimagined, 8
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 mixing together tamarisk and myrtle twigs.
 Fastening together the new budding wood,
 he tied the light sandals securely under his feet,
 leaves and all. The glorious Slayer of Argos
 took off from Pieria, shunning plain walking,
 shod as if for hastening on a long journey—a
 unique god.
 But an old man digging his blooming vineyard
 saw him
 hurrying to the plain through grassy Onchestos.
 The splendid son of Maia said to him:
 "Old Man, bent over hoeing around your plants, 9
 0
 you'll have a lot of wine when they all fruit
[missing line] [if you]
 don't see what you've seen, are deaf to what
 you've heard
 and keep quiet, since my business doesn't hurt
 yours."
 Saying that, he urged on the head of cattle.

Hermes drove them over shadowy mountains,
echoing valleys, and plains in full bloom.
With most of divine night—his dark ally—ending,
the workingman's dawn would soon appear.
As shining Selene (moon daughter of Lord Pallas,

son of Megamedes) ascended a steep peak,

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the brave son of Zeus drove Phoibos Apollo's
broad-chested cattle over the Alpheos river.
Still untamed, they reached the arching cave
and the troughs by the bountiful meadow.
After he had amply fed the loud-bellowing cows
on fodder of lotus and dewy galingale grasses,
he drove them crowded together into the fold.

Then he gathered some wood, seeking the skill of
fire.

With a knife, he stripped a shining laurel bough
[missing line]

fitting tightly in his palm, the hot flame flared up.

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(Hermes was the first to give us sticks to ignite
fire.)

He piled up many dry logs and packed them
tightly

into a pit in the ground: the glowing flame
spurted out a great blast of searing fire.

While the power of Hephaistos fed the blaze,
Hermes dragged two bellowing cows
outside near the flame; potent strength came to
him.

Throwing them on their backs, they lay panting
as he rolled them over and pierced their
backbones.

He added more work, cutting meat rich with fat; 1
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he roasted the meat pierced with wooden spits,
the flesh with the honorable back and dark blood
enclosed in the guts, and set it down right there.
Then he stretched out the hides on a rugged rock,
as they are even now, long since then,
long after these events and forever.
His heart delighted, Hermes pulled the rich meat
onto a smooth, flat stone and cut twelve portions
divided by lot, setting out each perfect prize.

Glorious Hermes craved the offering of meat, 1
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for the sweet scent rubbed at him—him a god!—
but his manly spirit could not persuade him,
despite his great desire to shove it down his
sacred throat.

Instead, he set all the meat and fat in the cave,
quickly lifting them up high in midair,
a sign of his recent theft. Then, heaping on dry
wood,
he destroyed the hooves and heads in the fire's
breath.

When he had finished everything according to its
need,
the god threw his sandals into the deep-eddying
Alpheos,
quenched the embers, and sanded smooth the 1

black ashes 4
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through the night, as the lovely light of Selene
shone down.

He quickly returned to the shining peak of
Kyllene

at dawn. During his long journey no one met him,
none of the blessed gods, no mortal men,
nor did dogs bark. Swift Hermes, son of Zeus,
turning sideways entered through the keyhole of
his house,

like a late summer breeze, even as mist.

Going straight through the cave, he walked softly
into the rich temple, with no usual sounds on the
floor.

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In haste, glorious Hermes climbed into his cradle. 5
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Wrapping his swaddling clothes around his
shoulders

like a newborn, he lay fingering the cloth about
his knees,

keeping the lovely tortoise to the left of his hand.

But the god did not escape the notice of his
goddess mother:

“Where have you been, you trickster, coming here
at night wrapped in shamelessness? Now I truly
believe

that soon, bound by Leto’s son with unbreakable
chains

around your ribs, you’ll leave through these
doors,

or, meanwhile, you’ll be a thief who raids

mountain glens.

Away again! Your father bore you to be a great
pest

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for mortal men and immortal gods.”

Hermes answered her with cunning words:

“Oh mother, why put these things to me
as if to a newborn, whose heart scarce knows
evil,

who cowers in fear, behind its mother’s
scoldings?

I’ll practice whatever art is best to serve
you and me forever. And the two of us
won’t put up with staying here, as you insist,
the only immortal gods with no gifts and no food.

Far better to chat every day among the gods,

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rich, really rich, with grain crops aplenty,
than to sit at home in a misty cave. As for honor,
I too will receive the same holy rites as Apollo.
If my father won’t give them to me,
then I’ll become the prince of thieves—watch me.
If Leto’s famous son tracks me down,
I think he’s got something bigger coming:
I’ll go to Pytho and break into his great house.
There, I’ll swipe many splendid tripods,

cauldrons and gold, plenty of flashing iron

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and heaps of clothing: you’ll see, if you want.”

With such words they spoke together,
the son of Zeus, who holds the aegis, and Queen

Maia.

Early-born Dawn, bringing light to mortals,
rose from deep-flowing Ocean. But Apollo
came to Onchestos to the lovely sacred grove
of Poseidon, the Earthshaker. He found an old
man

grazing his beast along the path, by the garden
fence.

Leto's famous son began speaking to him:

"Old Man of grassy Onchestos, picking berries, 1
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I came here from Pieria searching for my cattle—
cows all of them, all with twisted horns—
from my herd. The black bull grazes apart
from the others, but keen-eyed dogs follow them,
four dogs like men of one mind. Dogs and bull
were left behind, a marvel, to be sure.

But the cows took off, right after sunset,
out of the soft meadow, away from the sweet
pasture.

Tell me, Old Man born long ago, if you have seen

any man making away with those cows." 2
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The old man answered him, saying:

"My friend, it is hard to tell everything one might
see

with one's eyes: many travelers take this road
some eager for much evil, some much good,
as they wander—it is difficult to learn of each.
But all day until the sun set I was digging

about the hills of my wine-growing vineyard.
I thought, Sir, can't say for sure, that I saw a baby
of some sort following the curly-horned cattle,
a newborn, holding a staff and walking side to
side, 2
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driving them backward, their heads facing him."
Hearing the old man's account, Apollo sped on
his way.

He noticed a long-winged bird and knew at once
that the thief was a child of Zeus, son of Kronos.
Hurriedly Lord Apollo, son of Zeus, dashed
to holy Pylos seeking his rambling cattle;
a purple cloud covered his broad shoulders.
When the skillful Archer spied the tracks, he said:
"What! My eyes see quite a marvel!

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These are the tracks of my horned cattle,

but they are turned back to the asphodel
meadow.

And these are not footprints from man or woman,
from gray wolves, bears, or lions—
nor, I expect, those of a shaggy-necked centaur.
Whose swift feet would have such monstrous
strides,
dreadful footprints on this side, more dreadful on
that?"

So saying, Lord Apollo, son of Zeus,
sped away to forested Mount Kyllene, to the cave
hidden in shadows where the divine nymph
bore the child of Zeus, son of Kronos. 2

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A pleasant scent drifted over the holy mountain;
many lanky sheep grazed the grasses.
Apollo, who strikes from afar, quickly strode
over the stone threshold, into the misty cave.

Hermes, son of Zeus and Maia, saw Apollo
the skillful Archer, furious over his cattle.
He snuggled down into his fragrant swaddling
clothes:
as wood ash covers the hot embers of tree
stumps,
so Hermes curled up, seeing the one who works
from afar.

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He drew in tight his head, hands, and feet
like an infant after his first bath, inviting sweet
sleep,
though truly wide awake, holding the lyre under
his arm.

But the son of Zeus and Leto saw and knew
the beautiful mountain nymph and her son,
a little baby wrapped in cunning plots.
Looking around, up and down the inner chambers
of the great house, with a shining key he opened
three closets full of nectar and lovely ambrosia.
Ample gold and silver lay within the house

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and the nymph's many purple and silvery clothes,
as are kept in the sacred homes of the blessed

gods.

When the son of Leto had thoroughly searched
the recesses of the great house, he said to famous
Hermes:

“Child, lying in the cradle, tell me of my cattle
at once, or quickly we two will have a rough fight.
I will hurl you, throw you down into misty
Tartaros,
to the darkness of terrible, inescapable doom.
Your mother or father will not free you to the
light;
you will wander underground, leader among little
men.”

Hermes answered him with crafty words:

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“Leto’s son, what cruel things you say!
And you come here looking for field cattle?
I haven’t seen or learned of them, or heard a
word;
I couldn’t tell or win a reward for such a tale.
I don’t look like a cattle rustler, a strong man,
nor is that my business. I care about other things,
like sleep, my mother’s milk, swaddling clothes
wrapped round my shoulders, and warm baths.
May no one hear about this quarrel!

Yes, the gods would be thoroughly amazed

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that a newborn baby could lead cattle from the
field
through these doors—you’ve got me all wrong.
I was born yesterday, my feet are soft, the ground

rough.

If you wish, I will swear a great oath
on my father's head: I claim that I'm not guilty
nor have I seen anyone else steal your cattle—
whatever cattle are—I've heard only by rumor.”
So he said, with a gleam in his eyes,
and wiggled his brows, looking here and there,

whistling along, as if listening to an idle tale.

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Apollo, who works from afar, laughed softly:
“You cheating trickster, yes, by the way you talk
I think you broke into many rich houses last night
and more than one man you left sitting on a bare
floor,

after silently plundering his house.

I predict you will grieve many shepherds
in mountain valleys, whenever, craving flesh,
you chance upon their cattle and woolly sheep.
Come now, or you will enjoy your last and latest
sleep;

get out of your cradle, companion of dark night.

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Hereafter, among the gods you will have this
prize:

you will be called the prince of thieves forever.”

Seizing the baby, Phoibos Apollo carried him off.

Then, taking stock, the strong Slayer of Argos
sent out an omen while held in Apollo's hands:
a gassy omen from his body, a rude messenger.
And right after that, he sneezed. Apollo heard

and flung glorious Hermes to the ground.
 Though eager for the journey, Apollo squatted
 in front of Hermes and taunted him: "Take ³₀
 courage, ₀
 baby in swaddling clothes, son of Zeus and Maia:
 I will find my strong head of cattle after all—
 by these omens. Now lead the way."
 Kyllenian Hermes sprang up again in haste,
 pushing up his swaddling clothes, wrapped
 about his shoulders, to his ears and said:
 "Brute of the gods, who works from afar, where
 are you taking me? Why bother me because
 you're angry
 about cattle? Oh, I wish all cattle would just die!
 I didn't steal your cattle or see another steal ³₁
 them, ₀
 whatever cattle are—I've heard only by rumor.
 Take your case before Zeus, the son of Kronos."
 When each had questioned the other closely,
 shepherd Hermes and the mighty son of Leto
 still kept their minds at odds. Apollo spoke truly
[missing line]
 he justly seized glorious Hermes over the cattle,
 but with skillful and twisted words Hermes
 wished to deceive the silver-bowed god.
 His mind was great, but great, too, was Apollo's
 power,
 so Hermes walked quickly across the sand, ³₂
 with the son of Zeus and Leto following him. ₀

Soon the handsome sons of Zeus found their father,

the son of Kronos, atop fragrant Olympos.

There lay the scales of justice for both of them.

On snowy Olympos, the crowd of undying gods assembled after the rising of gold-throned Dawn.

Hermes and Apollo of the Silver Bow stood before the knees of Zeus. Loud-thundering Zeus spoke to his brilliant son, asking him:

“Phoibos, where did you find such agreeable plunder,

a newborn baby with the nature of a herald?

A weighty matter comes before the assembly of gods.”

Lord Apollo, who works from afar, answered:

“Father, you will soon hear no feeble tale, jeering that I alone am fond of plunder.

After crossing many lands, I found a child, this piercing robber, in the mountains of Kyllene

—

impudent, such as I have never seen among gods or men, who are such great thieves on earth.

Stealing my cows from their meadow in the evening,

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he drove them by the shore of the crashing sea straight to Pylos—the monstrous double tracks seemed wondrous, the work of a brilliant spirit.

As for the cattle, the dark dust revealed hoofprints facing toward the asphodel meadow.

But he himself, this impossible one, walked neither on his hands or feet across the sandy

ground,
but using some other craft, wore tracks
as strange as if someone could walk on slender
oaks.

While he drove them across the sandy ground, 3
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all the tracks showed quite easily in the dirt,
but when he passed beyond the long path of sand,
the cows' tracks and his own quickly became
invisible

on the hard ground. A mortal man observed him
driving the herd of broad-chested cattle straight
to Pylos.

Then he shut them in some secluded place
and juggled about here and there on the path.
Like black night, he lay down in his cradle
in a misty cave deep in the dark; a keen-eyed
eagle

could not have spied him. He rubbed his eyes 3
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with his hands many times, preparing tricky lies.
Right away, he told his story carelessly:
'I haven't seen or learned of them, or heard a
word;
I couldn't tell or win the reward for such a tale.'"
With that, Phoibos Apollo sat down.

Hermes told a different story to the immortals,
revealed to the son of Kronos, leader of all gods:
"Father Zeus, I'll tell you the truth:
I'm honest and don't even know how to lie.

At sunrise today, Apollo came to our house

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looking for his rambling cattle.

He brought no blessed gods as witnesses or spies.

He ordered me to confess, tried forcing me,
kept threatening to throw me into wide Tartaros.

He's blooming with youth and loves glory,
while I was born yesterday—as he knows—
nor do I look like a cattle rustler, a strong man.

Believe me, since you boast you're my father:
I didn't drive his cows to my house—so help me!

nor walk back over the threshold; I speak the truth.

I greatly revere Helios and the other gods;
I love you and fear him. You know
I'm not guilty. I'll swear a great oath,
yes, by these sturdy doors of the gods.
Although he's stronger, someday I'll repay him
for trespassing so cruelly. Defend the younger."
Glancing aside, the Slayer of Argos spoke,
clinging to the swaddling clothes on his arm.
Zeus laughed aloud to see his deceitful child

so skillfully deny the business of the cattle.

He commanded both sons to have one mind
in the search; Hermes the Guide to lead
and reveal the place—with no mischief in mind—
where he had hidden the strong head of cattle.

The son of Kronos nodded and Hermes obeyed,
for the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus easily
persuaded him.

The two handsome children of Zeus hurried
to sandy Pylos, coming to the banks of Alpheos.
They walked to the meadow and arching cave

where the cattle had been tended that night.

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While Hermes entered the stone cave and
drove the strong head of cattle into the light,
the son of Leto, glancing aside, saw the cowhides
on the steep rock, and quickly asked Hermes:

“How could you, newborn and feeble,
cut the throats of two cows, Wily One?

I marvel at your future strength: there’s no need
for you to keep growing, Kyllenian son of Maia.”

Apollo twisted willow withies to bind him,

but instead they sprouted up under Hermes’ feet,

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winding together from that spot as if grafted,
growing quickly over all the cattle in the field—
by the will of Hermes the Thief. Apollo watched
in amazement. But the mighty Slayer of Argos
glanced aside at the ground, eager to hide
the gleam of fire. He softened the skillful Archer
son of glorious Leto quite easily, as he wished,
although Apollo was stronger. Taking the lyre
in his left hand, he tried each strain with the pick,
her sound haunting under his touch. Phoibos
Apollo

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laughed, rejoicing; the lovely sound of the divine music

went through his heart and sweet longing took his soul as he listened. Playing the lyre beautifully,

Maia's son took courage and stood to the left of Phoibos Apollo. Soon he played a high, sweet prelude, his lovely voice following after, celebrating the immortal gods and dark Earth, how things first came to be and how each won its lot.

First of the gods, he honored in song Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses—the son of Maia fell to her lot.

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Then the glorious son of Zeus honored each one of the immortal gods from the eldest on down, singing of all in order, strumming the lyre on his arm.

Inescapable desire seized Apollo's heart and his words flew out to Hermes:

"Cow killer, trickster, hard worker, friend at a feast,

this business of yours is worth fifty cows.

I think that we will soon settle peacefully.

Now tell me, wily son of Maia,

did this amazing work come from your birth

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or did one of the immortals or mortal folk give you this splendid gift and teach you divine song?

Marvelous! this new musical voice I hear,
which I say that no one has ever learned before,
no men or gods, who have houses on Olympos,
apart from you, thieving son of Zeus and Maia.
What skill, what music of inescapable sorrows,
what study? It is truly possible to choose these
three at once: festivity, love, and sweet sleep.

Though I myself accompany the Olympian Muses, 4
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who care for dances, the shining path of song,
blooming melodies, and the thrilling cry of pipes,
never has anything else mattered so much to me,
not even the clever works of young men at feasts.
Son of Zeus, I'm amazed at how sweetly you play.
Now since you—though young—know splendid
arts,
be a good boy, respect the word of your elders.
Now among the immortal gods you will have
glory,
both you and your mother. I will proclaim it:

yes, by this cherry-wood spear, I will make you 4
6
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a leader glorious among the gods, and
prosperous;

I will give shining gifts and never deceive you."

Hermes answered him with words of cunning:

"Thoughtful one, who works from afar, you ask
and I don't at all grudge you learning my art.

You'll know it today. I want to be kind to you
in my plans and words, but you know all things
well,

son of Zeus, first among the gods, brave and strong.

Wise Zeus loves you according to every law,

and has given you shining gifts. They say that⁴
you,₇
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who works from afar, learn from the voice of Zeus
honors and prophecies straight from Zeus—all
the oracles.

Even I, a baby, have heard about that.

You can choose to learn whatever you so desire.

Since your heart eagerly urges you to play,
accept the lyre from me—sing, play,
and prepare festivities; but, my friend, grant me
glory.

Play well, caressing the clear-voiced lady lyre,
since you've the skill to sing all in good order.

Then free from care, bring her to the rich feast,₄
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beautiful dance and revel that loves glory,
festivity by night and day. If one who knows
skill and wisdom invites her, she'll teach
all sorts of things, speaking to delight the mind,
singing smoothly with gentle practice,
fleeing painful work. But if one who knows
nothing seeks her first with violence,
then she'll chatter in vain and off-key.

You can choose to learn whatever you so desire.

I'll give you the lyre, shining son of Zeus—₄
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God who works from afar, we will pasture the

field cattle

down the mountain and on the plain where horses
graze.

Then mixing with bulls, the cows will bear calves
in abundance, both male and female. There's no
need,

shrewd as you are, to have such violent anger."

Then Hermes held out the lyre to Phoibos Apollo,
who took it and put his bright whip in Hermes'
hand,

naming him "Cattle Herder." Maia's son
took it with joy. Holding the lyre in his left hand,

Leto's glorious son, Lord Apollo, who works from
afar, 5
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tried each strain with the pick, her sound
haunting

under his touch; the god sang along beautifully.

They turned the cows toward the divine meadow
and then the two handsome children of Zeus
hastened to snow-covered Olympos,
delighting in the lyre; wise Zeus was pleased
and joined them together in friendship.

Hermes loved Leto's son always, as even now,
since he put the desired lyre in the skillful
Archer's hand

as a sign—Apollo, knowing how, played it on his
arm. 5
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Hermes again sought out the skill of another art:
he made the syrinx, heard from a distance.

Then the son of Leto said to Hermes:

"Son of Maia, guide with a cunning mind,

I fear that you may steal my lyre and curved bow

—

Zeus gave you the honor to establish
deeds of exchange for men upon the fruitful
earth.

But if you will swear the great oath of the gods to
me

by nodding your head or by the potent water of
the Styx,

you would do everything pleasing and dear to my⁵
heart.”₂
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Then Maia’s son nodded, promising
never to steal what the skillful Archer had won
and never to go near his strong house. Apollo,
Leto’s son, nodded in friendship and love
that none of the other gods would be dearer,
no other god or human child of Zeus.

“I will make a sure sign to the gods and all alike
of the trust and honor in my heart. I will give
you the beautiful staff of fortune and wealth

with three gold branches; it will guard you⁵
unharméd,₃
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accomplishing all laws of good words and deeds,
which I have learned from the voice of Zeus.

But it is not ordained, noble one born of Zeus,
for you or any other god to learn the prophetic
art

you mention. The mind of Zeus knows that.

I made a pledge, nodding and swearing a great
oath

that none of the everliving gods except me
would know the wise counsel of Zeus. And you,
brother with the golden wand, do not command
me

to declare the decrees which far-seeing Zeus⁵
intends.₄
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As for humans, I will harm one and help another,
greatly confusing the wretched human race.
He will enjoy my voice, whoever heeds
the cry and flight of true omen birds;
he will enjoy my voice and I will not deceive him.
But whoever trusts in false omen birds
and wishes to seek prophecy contrary to my will,
to know more than the everliving gods,
his journey will be in vain, though I will take his
gifts.

I will tell you more, luck-bringing sprite of the⁵
gods,₅
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famous son of Maia and aegis-bearing Zeus:
there are certain holy sisters, three virgins
adorned with swift wings, their heads sprinkled
with white meal, who live in houses below the
glens
of Parnassus. They are the teachers of prophecy
other than mine, which I practiced as a boy
herding cattle, and my father paid no mind.
Fluttering about here and there from their valley,
they feed on honeycomb and accomplish
everything.

When they are inspired by eating golden honey, ⁵
₆

they cheerfully wish to proclaim the truth—
 but if they are deprived of the gods' sweet food,
 they tell lies as they swarm all together.
 These Bee Maidens I give you, since you ask truly,
 so delight your own heart. If you teach a mortal
 man,
 he will often hear your voice, if he is lucky.
 Take these, son of Maia, and the field cattle,
 and care for horses and hardworking mules."

"Glorious Hermes is to rule over fierce lions

and white-tusked boars, dogs and sheep

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which the wide earth nurtures, and all flocks.
 Only he is to be the appointed messenger to
 Hades,
 who, although giftless, will give no mean prize."
 So Lord Apollo loved the son of Maia
 with true friendship and the son of Kronos added
 grace.
 Hermes deals with all the mortals and immortals
 —
 sometimes he helps them, but through the dark
 night
 he tricks the race of mortal folk.

And so farewell to you, son of Zeus and Maia—

but I will remember you and the rest of the song.

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5. HYMN TO APHRODITE

Muse, tell me the deeds of golden Aphrodite,
the Cyprian, who arouses sweet desire in gods,
tames the tribes of deathbound people,
the birds swooping from heaven and all creatures
that land and sea nourish so well.

The work of richly crowned Cytheria affects
everyone,
except the three goddesses she cannot persuade
or fool.

The work of golden Aphrodite does not please
Athena,
the owl-eyed daughter of Zeus who bears the
aegis.

Athena rejoices in warfare and the work of Ares: $\frac{1}{0}$

combat, struggles, and glorious deeds.

She first taught earthbound craftsmen
to make carriages and chariots inlaid with
bronze.

She also taught glorious work in the house
to young women, instilling skill in each one.

Smile-loving Aphrodite cannot tame Artemis with
passion,
not the one with baying hounds and the golden
distaff.

Artemis delights in bows, hunting beasts in the
mountains,
in lyres, dances, and the shrill songs of women,
in shady groves and the cities of righteous men. 2
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The work of Aphrodite does not please Hestia,
the modest first born of conniving Kronos
(last born, too, through the plan of Zeus).
Wooed by Poseidon and Apollo, she was unwilling
and hard, refusing their offers of marriage.
Touching the head of Zeus who bears the aegis,
she swore a great oath, since then fulfilled,
to remain forever virgin, divine among
goddesses.
Instead of marriage, Father Zeus gave her a
prize:

Hestia rests at the hearth, the highest honor. 3
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All people revere her in every temple,
Hestia, the most august of the gods.

Aphrodite cannot persuade or deceive these three
goddesses, but no others have ever escaped her—
none of the blessed gods nor mortal folk.
She even distracted Zeus, who delights in
thunder,
the greatest god allotted the greatest honor,
deceiving even his strong mind whenever she
wished,
easily mating him with mortal women.

He would utterly forget Hera, sister and wife, 4
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the most beautiful of immortal goddesses,
 the sacred goddess whom conniving Kronos
 and mother Rhea bore. Zeus, wise in eternal
 plans,
 made her his honored wife, careful, and wise, too.
 Casting sweet desire into Aphrodite's own heart,
 Zeus made her long for a human man, so that
 even smile-loving Aphrodite herself could not
 keep out
 of a mortal man's bed. Then she could not tell—
 boasting among all the gods, laughing sweetly—
 how she made the gods mate with mortal women 5
 (who bore mortal sons to immortal fathers) 0
 and how she mated the goddesses with mortal
 men.
 Zeus cast sweet desire in her heart for Anchises—
 his body like a god's—who often tended cattle
 in the high mountains of Ida, rich in springs.
 When smile-loving Aphrodite saw him,
 she wanted him: desire seized her beyond all
 measure.
 She went to Cyprus, entering her fragrant temple
 at Paphos, with its sacred precinct and altar;
 she went in and closed the shining doors. 6
 The Graces bathed and anointed her with oil 0
 divine, as on the gods who live forever,
 pleasant ambrosia, sweet scented for her.
 Covering her body with fine clothes
 adorned with gold, smile-loving Aphrodite
 left fragrant Cyprus in a hurry for Troy—
 high in the clouds, she quickly made her way.

She landed on the mother of wild animals, Mount
Ida,
rich in springs, and headed toward the stading.
Gray wolves wagging their tails, lions eyes 7
flashing, 0
bears and swift leopards hungry for deer,
thronged about her.

Seeing them delighted her heart and spirit,
and she cast desire in their breasts. Instantly,
they lay down together by twos in their shady
lair.

Then she came upon the sturdy shelters
and found the hero Anchises alone—
the man whose beauty came from the gods.
The other herders had followed the cattle
to grassy pastures. Left alone at the stading,
he strolled about, playing piercing notes on his 8
lyre. 0

Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, stood before him
like an untouched virgin in form and stature,
so he would not be afraid when he set eyes on
her.

Seeing her, Anchises wondered, amazed
at her beauty, her stature, her shining clothes!
Her robe blazed past the radiance of fire,
spiral bracelets and earrings shining like flower
buds,
with brilliant necklaces gracing her soft throat,
like the moon shining on her soft breast,
beautifully inlaid in gold, a marvel. 9
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Passion seized Anchises, face to face he spoke to
her:

“Hail, Queen, whatever blessed one has reached
this house,
whether you are Artemis, Leto, or golden
Aphrodite,
noble Themis or owl-eyed Athena
or perhaps one of the Graces come here,
companions of all the gods and immortal,
or one of the nymphs who haunt the fair forests,
or nymphs who live here on this lovely mountain
in river springs and grassy meadows.

I will build you an altar on a hilltop visible

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from all around and make a holy sacrifice
to you every season. Gracious Goddess,
make me a man eminent among Trojans,
give me a flourishing son, let me live
long and well, seeing the light of the sun,
happy among my people, to the threshold of old
age.”

Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, replied:

“Anchises, most glorious of earthborn men,
I am no goddess. Why compare me to the gods?

I am mortal, truly born from a human mother.

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Otreus is my father—have you heard of him?—
a famous king, who rules all of Phrygia.

And I know your language clearly as my own
since my mother handed me to a Trojan nurse,
who raised me from childhood in our great hall.
That is why I speak your language so well.

accept the large, glorious dowry-payment. 1
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After that, make a wedding feast for the marriage
longed for and honored by men and immortal
gods."

So saying, the goddess cast sweet desire in his
heart.

Passion seized Anchises. He cried out:

"If you truly are mortal and a human woman bore
you,

if Otreus is your father's famous name, as you
declare,

and you come here by the will of the immortal
messenger

Hermes, and my wife you shall be forever more,
then none of the gods or mortal men here

will hold me back from mingling in love with you 1
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this moment. Not even if the skillful archer,
Apollo himself,

were to shoot arrows of grief from his silver bow.

Once I have mounted your bed, woman like a
goddess,

then I would be willing to enter the house of
Hades."

So he said, and took her hand. Smile-loving
Aphrodite

turned around, casting down her lovely eyes,

moving slowly to the bed richly spread

with soft cloaks ready for the master. Over the
bed

lay the skins of bears and deep-roaring lions,
beasts he had slain in the high mountains.

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When they climbed into the well-crafted bed,
first he removed all her shining jewelry: the
brooches,
spiral bracelets, flower-bud earrings, and
necklaces.

Anchises loosened her belt, slipped off her
splendid clothes,

setting them down on a silver-studded chair. By
the will

of the gods and fate, he lay down with an
immortal

goddess—a mortal man uncertain of the truth.

At dusk, when herdsmen bring cows and fat
sheep

back to the fold from the blooming pastures,

Aphrodite poured sweet sleep over Anchises,

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pleasant sleep, and dressed herself in her lovely
robes.

Clad in all her finery, the most heavenly goddess
stood up in the shelter. Her head nearly touched
the strong roof beam; richly crowned Cytheria's
cheeks shone with her immortal beauty.

She roused Anchises from sleep, calling his name:
"Son of Dardanos, wake up! Why sleep so
soundly?

Tell me whether I now seem as I was
when first you laid eyes on me?"

He heard her instantly out from his sleep.

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When he saw the throat and lovely eyes of
Aphrodite,

he was frightened and turned his eyes from her.

Again he covered his handsome face with a cloak
and his words flew out in prayer and pleading:

“When my eyes first saw you, goddess, right away
I knew you were divine, but you did not tell the
truth.

Now I beg you, by Zeus who bears the aegis,
do not let me live among men alive, but
unmanned.

Take pity! A man’s life ceases to flourish

if he lies in bed with an immortal goddess.”

Then Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, answered him:

“Anchises, most honored of mortal men,
take courage; drive fear from your mind.

You will suffer no harm, not from me or any
of the Blessed Ones, for you are dear to the gods.

No, you will have a son who will rule among
Trojans

and children will be descended from his children
forever.

Aeneas will be his name because a terrible grief
possesses me since I fell into the bed of a mortal
man.

Of all mortal men, those in your family always

have been close to the gods in beauty and stature.

Wise Zeus seized Ganymede for his blond beauty.
Now he lives among the immortal gods
and pours wine for them in Zeus' house—
amazing, a man honored by all the immortals,
drawing the red nectar from a gold mixing bowl.
But unrelenting sorrow held father Tros: he did
not know
where the divine whirlwind had taken his dear
son.

Every day, he grieved without end for his son.

At last, Zeus had pity on him: in payment for his²
son₁
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he gave him spirited horses, the kind the gods
ride.

He gave Tros the horses to keep as a gift.

Hermes the Guide told him Zeus' command:

Ganymede would live forever, unaging, like the
gods.

When Tros heard this message from Zeus,
he ceased grieving and his spirit rejoiced;
he joyfully rode the wind-footed horses.

And Eos on her golden throne stole Tithonos,
a man like the gods, also from your own family.

Dawn begged the storm-cloud son of Kronos²
₂
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that Tithonos be immortal and live forever.
Zeus nodded to her, fulfilling her wish.

But foolish Dawn did not think to ask
him for youth, to erase deadly old age.
So as long as beautiful youth held him,
he lived by Ocean's stream at earth's edge
delighting in early-born Dawn on her golden
throne.

But when the gray hairs first rained down
on his handsome head and noble chin,

then Dawn completely avoided his bed.

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She tended him with bread and ambrosia,
keeping him in her halls and giving him fine
clothes.

But when hateful old age weighed him down
and he could not move his limbs or raise up,
this plan appeared best in her heart:
she set him in a chamber and closed the shining
doors.

His voice flows on without ceasing
and the strength in his supple limbs is gone.

No, I would not choose such immortality for you,

to be immortal, to live like that forever.

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If you could live as my husband,
keeping the form and beauty you now have,
then grief would not cloud my crowded mind.
But soon distressing old age will shroud you,
without pity, since it happens to all men,
a deadly trouble that the gods themselves hate.
As for me, I will be greatly shamed forever

among the immortal gods because of you.
 When all the gods mingled with human women,
 my talk and plans always frightened them—
 my will always conquered them all.
 Now my mouth can no longer speak out
 on such things among the gods, once I so
 foolishly
 did a terrible, unspeakable thing—my mind went
 astray:
 I put a child under my belt, bedding down with a
 man.
 When the sun's light first sees the child,
 the deep-breasted mountain nymphs will nurse
 him.
 They live on this holy mountain
 and are neither mortal nor immortal:
 they live a long time and eat immortal food,
 and dance lovely dances among the gods.
 The Sileni and Hermes, the good Guide,
 mingle with them in love, deep inside caves.
 As the nymphs are born, pines and high-crowned
 oaks
 grow with them on the man-nourishing earth,
 fair trees flourishing in the high mountains.
 They stand tall and men call them the grove
 of the gods—no mortals fell them with axes.
 But when their destined death has come,
 first the lovely trees wither on the earth,

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the bark dies and the branches fall away;
 then the souls of the nymphs leave the sun's light.
 These nymphs will raise my son themselves.
 When precious youth first touches him,
 they will bring your child here just to show you.
 Now I will recount the things on my mind.
 In his fifth year, I will bring back your son.
 When your eyes first see this flourishing child,
 you will rejoice at the sight—he will be godlike.

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You will bring him right back to windy Troy

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and if any mortal man asks you
 what mother conceived your dear son,
 you will say to him—remember what I command
 you—

say that a blossoming nymph living
 on this wooded mountain bore him.

But if you should boast, foolishly saying
 you mingled in love with richly crowned Cytheria,
 angry Zeus will strike you with a smoldering
 thunderbolt.

You have been warned. Knowing that, keep your
 silence

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and do not name me: fear the wrath of the gods.”

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When she finished, she flew off to windy heaven.

Hail, Goddess, ruler of well-built Cyprus!

I began with you and will turn to the rest of the
 hymn.

6. HYMN TO APHRODITE

I will sing to lovely Aphrodite, revered goddess
crowned in gold, who protects the citadels of
Cyprus,

island where the misty gales of Zephyros
cradled her in soft foam over the waves
of the roaring sea. The Horai, wearing gold tiaras,
gladly welcomed her, dressed her in divine robes,
placed on her immortal head a finely crafted
crown

of lovely gold, set blossoms of mountain-copper
and costly gold in her pierced ears,

and adorned her soft throat and silvery breast 1
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with gold necklaces like those that grace
the Horai wearing gold tiaras when they fly
to the gods' dance and their father's house.

When they had fully adorned her body,
they led her to the gods, who welcomed the sight
and offered her their hands. Each god prayed
to take her home as his wedded wife, so amazed
were they at the beauty of violet-crowned
Cytheria.

Farewell, sweet gentle Goddess with dancing eyes:

grant me victory in this contest, ready my song— 2
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but I will remember you and the rest of the song.

7. HYMN TO DIONYSOS

I will remember Dionysos, son of glorious Semele,
as he appeared on a jutting headland near the
shore

of the barren sea. He seemed a young man
in first bloom, with his lovely dark hair flowing,
a purple cloak around his strong shoulders.

Tyrsenian pirates aboard a large ship
approached quickly on the wine-dark sea,
led by an evil destiny. Seeing him, they nodded
to one another and leapt out at once, seized him
and put him aboard their ship, their hearts
rejoicing. 10

They thought he was a son of Zeus-raised kings,
so they wanted to bind him with harsh ropes.
But the ties could not hold him; the willow withies
fell away from his hands and feet. Dionysos sat,
his dark eyes smiling. The helmsman understood
immediately and called to his companions:

“Mates, who is this strong god you’ve nabbed?
Our well-built ship cannot carry him.
He’s either Zeus or Silverbow Apollo

or Poseidon. He does not look like mortal men, 20

but far more like the Olympian gods.

Come, let’s set him free on dry land right away.

Don’t lay a hand on him or his anger might stir up
savage winds and a full-blown tempest.”

Then the captain rebuked him with rough words:
“Mate, see the fair wind? Now, take up the
riggings
and hoist the ship’s sail. The men will see to him.
I expect he’ll reach Egypt or Cyprus
or the Hyperboreans, maybe farther—in the end
he’ll tell us his friends and all their wealth, 3
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and his brothers, too, since a god cast him to us.”
With that, he hoisted the mast and set sail;
wind blew in midsail, pulling the rigging tight.
Marvelous deeds were soon revealed to the
pirates.
First, wine, sweet to drink and smell, flowed
through
the black ship and a heavenly fragrance arose.
The sight seized them all with amazement.
Then vines stretched all over atop the sail,
hanging down with thick clusters of grapes.
Dark ivy twisted around the mast 4
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blooming with flowers, rich berries sprang out
and the oarlocks wore garlands. Seeing all that,
the crew told the helmsman to head landward.
But in the ship’s bow, the god appeared to them
as a terrible lion and gave a mighty roar.
Performing wonders midship, he made a shaggy
bear
rear up, raging, while the lion glared ferociously
from the high deck. The men fled in fear to the
stern,
where they clustered panic-stricken around
the sober-minded helmsman. With a sudden leap, 5

the lion seized the captain. Then all the rest,
fleeing their doom, dove into the glistening sea
and became dolphins. But the merciful god
stopped the helmsman and granted him true
fortune:

“Take courage, good man—you who have pleased
my heart.

I am thundering Dionysos, whom my mother
Semele,
daughter of Kadmos, bore, mingling in love with
Zeus.”

Hail, child of fair Semele! There is no way
to forget you and still compose sweet song.

8. HYMN TO ARES

Mighty Ares, gold-helmed chariot master,
shield-bearer, bronze-armored city guard, strong-
willed,
strong-armed, untiring spear strength, defense of
Olympos,
father of Victory in war, aid to Themis,
tyrant to enemies, leader of righteous men,
wielding manhood's scepter, your red orb whirling
among the seven paths of the planets through the
ether
where your fiery stallions bear you above the third
orbit.

Hear me, ally of mortals, you grant blossoming
youth,

blazing down a soft flame into my life

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and warrior strength that I might drive
bitter wickedness from my head,
my mind bending my soul's deceitful impulse,
to restrain my heart's sharp temper provoking me
to enter bone-cold battle. But you, Blessed One,
give me courage to stay within the gentle laws of
peace,
fleeing enemy battle and violent death.

9. HYMN TO ARTEMIS

Sing, Muse, to Artemis, sister of the Far-shooter,
virgin who rains arrows, raised with Apollo.
After watering her horses along the rushes of
Meles,
she swiftly drives her golden chariot through
Smyrna
to vine-laden Klaros where Silverbow Apollo,
who strikes from afar, awaits the one who rains
arrows.
You and all the goddesses, rejoice in my song:
I began first to sing about you and yours—
having begun with you, I will turn to the rest of
the hymn.

10. HYMN TO APHRODITE

I will sing to Cyprian Cytheria, who gives
kind gifts to mortals; on her lovely face,
ever smiling, an alluring bloom shimmers.
Hail, Goddess, ruling well-built Salamis
and Cyprus in the sea: give me an alluring song—
but I will remember you and the rest of the song.

11. HYMN TO ATHENA

I sing to Pallas Athena, dread guardian of the city.
Warfare is the province of Athena and Ares:
sacked cities, battle cries, and wars;
she guards people setting out and returning home.
Hail Goddess! Grant us prosperity and luck.

12. HYMN TO HERA

I sing of gold-enthroned Hera, daughter of Rhea,
statuesque divine queen,
sister and glorious wife of loud-rumbling Zeus.
All the blessed gods in high Olympos
stand in awe and honor her equally
with thunder-loving Zeus.

13. HYMN TO DEMETER

I sing of the revered goddess, rich-haired Demeter,
and her most beautiful daughter Persephone.

Hail, Goddess! Save this city and rule my song.

14. HYMN TO MOTHER OF THE GODS

Sing to me, Muse, clear-voiced daughter of great
Zeus,
about the Mother of all gods and all people.
Clash of castanets and kettledrums, the trill of
reed pipes
please her, as do the howl of wolves, roar of fierce
lions,
echoing mountains and wooded valleys.
You and all the goddesses, rejoice in my song.

15. HYMN TO LION-HEARTED HERAKLES

I will sing of Herakles, son of Zeus, the best man
on earth by far, born in Thebes, city of fine dances,
after Alkmene mingled with the storm-cloud son of
Kronos.

Herakles used to wander over the unmeasured
earth

and sea at the bidding of King Eurystheus;
he performed many daring deeds and endured
much.

Now in the lovely seat of snowy Olympos
he lives in pleasure with his slender-ankled Hebe.
Hail, Lord, son of Zeus! Grant me excellence and
wealth.

16. HYMN TO ASKLEPIOS

I sing to Asklepios, physician of sickness,
son of Apollo, whom godlike Koronis,
daughter of King Phlegyas, bore in the Dotion
plain
as a great joy to people, a healer of evil pain.
Hail, Lord! I pray to you in song.

17. HYMN TO THE DIOSKOUROI

Sing, clear-voiced Muse, of Kastor and Polydeukes
sons of Tyndareus, whom Olympian Zeus begot,
sons Queen Leda bore under the crown of Mount
Taygetos,

overpowered in secret by the storm-cloud son of
Kronos.

Hail, Tyndarids, riders of swift horses!

18. HYMN TO HERMES

I sing to Kyllenian Hermes, Slayer of Argos,
Guardian of Mount Kyllene and Arcadia, rich in
flocks,
Luck-bringing messenger of gods, born when
Maia,
daughter of Atlas, joined in love with Zeus.
Shunning the crowd of blessed gods, the revered
goddess
lived in the shady cave where the son of Kronos
used to lie with her in the dark of night
(while sweet sleep held white-armed Hera)
unnoticed by immortal gods and mortal men.

Son of Zeus and Maia, rejoice in this: 1
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I began with you and will turn to the rest of the
hymn.

Hail, Hermes, guide who gives joy and good
fortune!

19. HYMN TO PAN

Tell me, Muse, about Hermes' dear son,
his goat-footed, two-horned, noise-loving son
who roams wooded meadows with dancing
nymphs.

The goddesses scamper up cliffs of sheer rock
invoking Pan, shepherd god with wild, shining
hair,

whose domain includes all snowy crests,
mountain heights, and rocky paths.

He wanders through thick underbrush
now drawn to gentle streams,

now hoofing about steep boulders, 1
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climbing to the highest peak to watch for sheep.

Often he dashes across white mountain ridges;
often he tramps keen-eyed across the foothills,
slaying beasts. Only back from the hunt at
evening,

he whistles, playing a sweet tune on his pipes.

No bird, not even a nightingale among the leaves
pouring forth a lament of honey-tongued song
during spring bloom, could surpass his melodies.

The mountain nymphs join him, their voices high,

their feet a blur as they dance in a deep spring, 2
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an echo resounding about the mountain top.

Then the god slips to the center, shaping the

dance
with feet flashing, wearing a tawny lynx pelt
on his back. The piercing song thrills him
in the soft meadow where sweet-smelling crocus
and hyacinth bloom, mingling with grasses.

They celebrate the blessed gods and high Olympos
and sing about preeminent Hermes the Luck-
bringer:

how he is the swift messenger for all the gods;

how he alighted in Arcadia, motherland of many 3
0
springs and flocks, and Kyllene, his sacred
mountain.

There, though a god, he served the mortal Dryops,
tending curly-fleeced sheep, when wet desire
bloomed

to mingle in love with the man's fair-haired
daughter.

From that, he won a flourishing marriage. In her
house

Dryope bore Hermes a dear son, marvelous to
behold:

goat-footed, horned, full of noise and sweet
laughter.

Jumping up, his mother fled in fear and left the
child

when she saw his rough, full-bearded face.

Luck-bringing Hermes quickly took him in his 4
arms, 0

welcoming him, and the god's mind filled with joy.

Wrapping his child in the thick fur of mountain
hare,

he flew swiftly to the home of the immortals.

Hermes set him down by Zeus and the other gods,
and revealed his son. All the gods were delighted
in their hearts, but especially Bacchic Dionysos.

“Pan” they named him, because he delighted them
“all.”

And so farewell, Lord, as I appease you with song

—

but I will remember you and the rest of the song.

20. HYMN TO HEPHAISTOS

Clear-voiced Muse, sing of Hephaistos,
famous for craft. He and owl-eyed Athena taught
glorious works to earthbound humans,
who used to live like animals in mountain caves.
Now they easily learn skills from Hephaistos,
whose skill is renowned, and live their lives
at ease in their own houses all year around.
Be gracious, Hephaistos; grant excellence and
wealth!

21. HYMN TO APOLLO

Phoibos, even the swan wings a high song to you
as it alights on the riverbank of the swirling
Peneios.

The sweet-sounding bard, with lyre pitched
high and clear, always sings of you first and last.
And so farewell, Lord, as I appease you with song.

22. HYMN TO POSEIDON

I begin to sing of the great god Poseidon
who shifts the earth and barren sea,
god of the waters, and of Helike and wide Aigai.
Earthshaker, the gods allotted you a double honor
as tamer of horses and savior of ships.
Farewell, Poseidon, blue-haired god who holds
earth;
with a kind heart, Blessed One, aid those who sail.

23. HYMN TO ZEUS

I will sing of Zeus, the best and greatest of gods,
far-seeing king, the accomplisher, who keeps
Themis
deep in discussion as she sits leaning toward him.
Be gracious, far-seeing Kronion, greatest and most
glorious!

24. HYMN TO HESTIA

Hestia, you tend the sacred hearth
of far-shooting Lord Apollo in holy Pytho,
anointing-oil ever dripping from your braids—
come to this house, come, sharing your heart
with cunning Zeus: bestow grace on my song.

25. HYMN TO THE MUSES, APOLLO, AND ZEUS

I will begin with the Muses, Apollo, and Zeus:
from the Muses and the skillful archer Apollo
come human bards and lyre players on earth,
and from Zeus, kings. Whoever the Muses love
is blessed: sweet sound flows from his mouth.
Rejoice, children of Zeus, and honor my song—
but I will remember you all and the rest of the
song.

26. HYMN TO DIONYSOS

I sing of ivy-crowned Dionysos, the roaring god,
radiant son of Zeus and glorious Semele.
Lovely nymphs, receiving him from his lord father,
nursed him at their breasts and fostered him
tenderly
in Nysian valleys. He grew up in a fragrant cave,
by his father's will, counted among the immortals.
When the goddesses had raised him, a god
celebrated
in so many hymns, he roamed through forest
haunts,
draped with ivy and laurel. The nymphs followed
as he led the way: their loud cry filled the vast
forest. 0
Rejoice, Dionysos, god of the plentiful grape!
May we come again rejoicing to this season
and from that season on, through the revolving
years.

27. HYMN TO ARTEMIS

I sing of Artemis, goddess with baying hounds
and golden distaff, revered virgin, deer hunter
who rains arrows, sister of gold-bladed Apollo.
Delighting in the hunt over shaded hill
and windy heights, she draws her golden bow
and shoots deadly arrows. The ridges
on the highest mountain tremble, animal cries
echo horribly in the dense forest, the earth
shakes and the fish-ridden sea. Stout-hearted,
she whirls around, slaying the race of wild beasts. $\frac{1}{0}$

When the mistress of animals, who rains arrows,
is content and her mind pleased, she unstrings
her well-made bow and visits the great house
of her dear brother Phoibos Apollo in rich Delphi
to guide the Muses and Graces in lovely dance.
There she hangs up her curved bow and arrows,
and leads the way, her body gracefully adorned,
beginning the dance. In divine voice, the
goddesses
sing how slender-ankled Leto bore children
far the best of all the gods in counsel and deeds. $\frac{2}{0}$

Farewell, children of Zeus and lovely-haired Leto—
but I will remember you all and the rest of the
song.

28. HYMN TO ATHENA

I sing of the glorious goddess Pallas Athena,
owl-eyed deity with crafty wisdom and steady
heart,

revered virgin, stalwart guardian of the city,
Tritogeneia. From his august head, cunning Zeus
himself gave birth to her, born in warlike armor
of gleaming gold. Awe seized all the gods
watching.

She sprang quickly from his immortal head
and stood in front of Zeus who bears the aegis,
shaking her sharp spear. Great Olympos reeled

violently beneath the might of her shining eyes,

the earth let out an awful cry, and the deep shifted,

churning with purple waves. Suddenly the sea
held still and the shining son of Hyperion halted
his swift horses a long while until the maiden
Pallas Athena lifted the godlike armor
from her divine shoulders, and wise Zeus rejoiced.

Hail, child of aegis-bearing Zeus—

but I will remember you and the rest of the song.

29. HYMN TO HESTIA AND HERMES

Hestia, in the lofty homes of all immortal gods
and humans who walk the ground,
you won the eternal seat, the most ancient honor
with great rewards and respect. Mortals have no
feasts without you—they begin by pouring
honey-sweet wine first and last to Hestia.

Hermes, son of Zeus and Maia, Slayer of Argos,
messenger of the blessed gods, whose golden
wand

grants good fortune,
stay in these lovely homes together in friendship,
in kindness help me, joining with revered and dear¹₀

Hestia—as you two observe the good deeds
of earthbound folk, attend them in mind and body.

Rejoice, daughter of Kronos and gold-wand
Hermes—

but I will remember both of you and the rest of the
song.

30. HYMN TO GAIA

I will sing to the mother of all, firmly rooted Gaia,
the oldest deity, who feeds all the world's life—
whether on divine land, in the deep sea,
or flying about—all beings feed from your plenty.
Fine children and rich harvests arise from you,
O Queen; you alone give mortal folk a livelihood
or take it away. The one you graciously honor
is truly blessed. For him all is abundant:
his life-giving fields bear fruit, flocks thrive

in his pastures, his house is full of good things. 1
0

Such men rule with just laws cities of lovely
women.

Great good fortune and wealth follow them:
their sons rejoice with fresh-blooming cheer,
and in flower-laden choruses their joyful
daughters

play, skipping in the grass among soft blossoms.
Happy those you honor, august Goddess, abundant
spirit!

Farewell, mother of the gods, wife of starry
Ouranos.

Gladly grant a welcome livelihood for my song—
but I will remember you and the rest of the song.

31. HYMN TO HELIOS

Begin to sing, O Muse Kalliope, daughter of Zeus,
about shining Helios, whom cow-eyed
Euryphaessa

bore to the son of Gaia and starry Ouranos.

When Hyperion married glorious Euryphaessa,
his sister, she gave birth to beautiful children:

Eos with rosy arms, Selene with fine braids,
and untiring Helios, resembling the immortals,
who shines on humans and gods, riding his horses.
From his golden helmet, he sees with blazing eyes,

brilliant light streams from him 1
0

and by his temples the glowing cheek-guards
gracefully frame the soaring radiance of his face.

The finely woven, luminous clothes on his skin
shimmer in the rush of winds. Stallions . . .

[missing line]

The wondrous god stays his gold-yoked chariot
and horses

until he sends them through heaven toward
Ocean.

Hail, Lord, gladly grant me a welcome livelihood—
I began with you and will glorify the race of fluent
men,

demigods whose deeds the gods revealed to
mortals. 2
0

32. HYMN TO SELENE

Sing next of the long-winged Moon,
Muses skilled in song, melodious daughters
of Kronion Zeus. From her immortal head in
heaven
rays whirl over the earth, deep beauty rises
in her brilliant light. The dusky air glows
from her golden crown, moonbeams linger,
when shining Selene bathes her lovely skin
in Ocean, slips into a dress of infinite radiance,
yokes her luminous colts, necks arching high,
and swiftly drives the glossy horses on 1
0
in evening at midmonth. Her great orbit full,
as she waxes, the rays from heaven grow
brightest.
Then she is a wonder and a sign for mortals.
Once the son of Kronos mingled in love with her;
she conceived and bore Pandeia, a daughter
lovely beyond measure among the deathless gods.
Hail, gracious Queen, white-armed, radiant
Selene,
goddess with lush braids: beginning with you,
I will sing about the glory of demigods, whose
deeds
the bards, servants of the Muses, celebrate in 2
sweet song. 0

33. HYMN TO THE DIOSKOUROI

Dancing-eyed Muses, tell of the sons of Zeus,
the Tyndarids, slender-ankled Leda's glorious
boys:

Kastor the horse tamer and blameless Polydeukes.
After mingling in love with the storm-cloud son of
Kronos,
under the crown of Mount Taygetos, Leda bore
twins,
saviors of earthbound folk and swift-sailing ships.

When wintry gales rage over the relentless sea,
sailors invoke the sons of mighty Zeus
with prayer offerings of white lambs,
as they climb to the high stern deck.

1
0

Strong wind and wave of the sea force the ship
under water. Suddenly the gods appear,
darting on whirring wings through the air.
They stop the blasts of cruel winds at once
and calm the waves of the white salty sea—
fair signs of their toil to the sailors.
They rejoice and cease their painful labor.

Hail, Tyndarids, riders of swift horses—
but I will remember you and the rest of the song.

34. HYMN TO XENOI

Respect the one who needs hospitality and a
home,
you folk dwelling in the steep city of lovely-eyed
Hera
at the foot of towering Saidene,
who drink ambrosial water from the golden river,
sweetly flowing Hermus, born to immortal Zeus.

NOTES

1. DIONYSOS

Dionysos, a vegetation deity, is the god of ecstasy, inspiration, religious possession, iambic (lampooning) and dithyrambic (cult) song, theater, and wine. Although the Greeks sometimes portrayed Dionysos as an invading foreign god, he was worshipped in Greece from very ancient times. His name appears in the Mycenaean Linear B tablets from Bronze Age Greece. In art, Dionysos usually wears a garland of ivy and holds a drinking cup. See the *Hymn to Dionysos* 7 for a longer narrative.

This hymn originally was one of the long hymns, at 411 lines; only these four fragments survive. The first fragment came near the beginning of the hymn and lists some of the many places that people claimed were Dionysos' birthplace, only to state that his true birthplace is the Nysa near the mouths of the Nile in Egypt. The third fragment (15–37) has only recently been recognized as part of this hymn; it helps reveal the story of Hera's eventual acceptance of Dionysos on Mount Olympos. The final twelve lines provide the ending of the original hymn.

When Semele, daughter of Kadmos and the goddess Harmonia, was pregnant with Zeus' son, Hera, Zeus' wife, tricked her into asking Zeus to reveal himself to her in his true form. Zeus was forced to do so because he had sworn to

Semele that he would grant any request. As a result, Zeus' heavenly fire consumed Semele. Zeus rescued the premature Dionysos from his mother's womb and sewed him into his own thigh to complete gestation. Thus Dionysos was born twice, once from his human mother and then from his divine father. The obscure epithet for Dionysos *eiraphiota*—Bullgod (2)—may mean "Insewn," referring to this story.

1. "Drakanos" is probably Drekanon, a promontory on Kos, an island southwest of modern-day Turkey. Ikaros is an island in the eastern Aegean Sea, west of Samos and northwest of Kos.

2. Naxos is a large island in the Cyclades in the Aegean Sea, where Dionysos found Ariadne after Theseus abandoned her.

3. Alpheos is a river near Olympia in Elis, in the western Peloponnesus.

5. Thebes, a city in Boeotia, was generally accepted as Dionysos' birthplace. Euripides' *Bacchae* has Dionysos born there.

8. There were many places named Nysa, located in and out of Greece, including in Caria and India.

9. Phoenicia was the coastal region north of Israel.

15–37. After Hera threw Hephaistos off Mount Olympos for being lame, Hephaistos sent her a trick golden throne. When Hera sat down on it, inescapable chains bound her, and Hephaistos refused to return to Olympos to free her. Zeus suggests (30) that their son Ares or Zeus' son Dionysos can get Hephaistos to return. The tale would continue with Ares failing with force, while Dionysos succeeds by getting Hephaistos drunk and leading him to Olympos—thus winning Hera's favor.

38. After a sizable gap, the hymn picks up with Zeus proclaiming biennial festivals to Dionysos. The Greeks counted the biennial festival as occurring "every third year" because they considered the year of the festival to be year 3, as well as year 1 of the next cycle.

41. Zeus is the son of the Titans Kronos and Rhea.

45. Groups of women were possessed by Dionysos with religious frenzy and so were called “maenads,” meaning “madwomen.”

49. Some sources say that Semele was called Thyone after her apotheosis, which was accomplished either at her death by Zeus or when Dionysos rescued her from the underworld.

2. DEMETER

The *Hymn to Demeter* is the first of the four long hymns. There are many versions of the story of Persephone’s abduction by Hades, ruler of the dead, and her cyclical return to join her mother, Demeter, the grain goddess. The *Hymn to Demeter* is our second-earliest recorded version, after the three lines treating the myth in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (912–14). Other variants probably existed previously in the oral tradition. In versions recorded in later sources, the return of Persephone causes the introduction of the seasons or the gift of agriculture. In some, Persephone’s disappearance leads immediately to famine. In others, Demeter rewards humans with her Mysteries because they helped her search for Persephone. In the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, however, the scene on earth with the people in Eleusis occupies the center of the story. Only after Demeter fails to make Demophon immortal does she cause the famine and succeed in causing Persephone’s return. Directly after restoring fertility to the earth, Demeter grants her Mysteries to the Eleusinians, without providing an explicit reason for her gift.

The Eleusinian Mysteries began in the seventh or eighth century B.C.E. and continued until the fourth century C.E. For nearly 1,200 years, initiates throughout the Greek world, and beyond, celebrated the most famous and popular of all the Greek mystery cults. The word “mystery” derives from *mustēs* (initiate). All classes, both sexes, the slave and the free, Greeks and foreigners could be initiated, as long as they

had the minimal price of initiation, spoke Greek, and had not committed murder. After a purification process, sacred things (*hiera*) were revealed to the initiates (*mustai*). Secrecy was essential: no one told the uninitiated what happened at the core of the initiation experience. Thus we have information on the process of the festival, but are ignorant about the actual revelation.

The nine-day festival began in Athens in the fall. The rites included bathing in the sea, fasting, sacrificing a piglet, and a fourteen-mile torch-lit procession north to Eleusis. In Eleusis, the *mustai* and their guides sang, danced around the Kallikhoron well, and drank the ritual *kukeōn* (barley water and pennyroyal mint) before entering Demeter's temple. The temple could hold several thousand people, but it was dark and full of pillars; initiates could not see much. Aristotle said that the *mustai* were not meant to learn something, but to experience and be moved (fr. 15). The experience of initiation brought joy and blessings in this life and eased the fear of death through the hope of a happier afterlife. Initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries was a life-transforming experience, based on the descent and return of Demeter's daughter.

Although this hymn directly refers to Demeter's gift of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the poem and the core story of Demeter and Persephone are connected with other mystery festivals as well. Eleusis was the site of some women-only mysteries, including the Thesmophoria, a wide-spread festival that appears to be much older than the Eleusinian Mysteries. Several aspects of the *Hymn to Demeter*, such as Iambe's jokes and Demeter's role as nurse, may be more closely connected to the Thesmophoria than to the Eleusinian Mysteries (see Clinton 1992). Aspects of the Eleusinian Mysteries may derive from earlier local women's festivals (see Brumfield 1996).

2. Persephone's name isn't given until line 56. In cult she was usually called Kore (Girl; 8).

3. The epithet "far-seeing" could also mean "mighty-voiced."

Lines 2-3 reflect two opposing perspectives continued throughout the hymn: Zeus “gives” Persephone away as in marriage, and Helios calls Hades Demeter’s new “son-in-law” (84); yet Hades “snatches” (*harpazō*—“abducts,” “rapes”) Persephone, and Persephone and Demeter both repeat that the abduction was forced on her unwillingly (see DeBloois 1997).

7. This narcissus is no ordinary flower, but a hundred-headed marvel produced by Gaia specifically to entrap Persephone. Mother Earth facilitates Zeus and Hades’ plan through her *dolos* (lure, trick, bait; 8, 404). The flowerlike girl (8) reaches to pick the flower and instead is herself picked.

17. It is impossible to tell which of the many places called Nysa this Nysian plain refers to, which may be the point: the hymn gives the location of the event a specific name, but it is Panhellenic. The name is connected to Dionysos (see 1.8).

23. According to Richardson (1974: ad loc.), the olive trees represent nature, since they are a common Greek feature. The three-part division of gods, humans, and nature is repeated in lines 44-46 with birds instead of trees. Richardson suggests that “Olives” be capitalized because they might be tree nymphs, such as in the *Hymn to Aphrodite* (5.264).

25. Hekate was one of the two deities who heard Persephone’s cry. She often attends Persephone in cult depictions. Her position in the cave puts her in a liminal position, on earth and in the earth, and thus perhaps between earth and the underworld.

26. Unlike Hekate, the all-seeing sun, Helios, both heard and saw what happened.

30. Here Hades is called “son of Kronos,” the epithet frequently used for Zeus (27, etc.). The hymn makes clear the connection and complicity of the brothers; Zeus and Hades are powerful rulers (of Olympos and the underworld

respectively), sons of Kronos, who arranged the transfer of Persephone from one to the other (32).

33–37. These lines give us a brief glimpse of Persephone's point of view. She is still hopeful as long as she is on earth; she has a "strong mind" (*megan noon*). Most of the hymn is from Demeter's perspective. We can tell from this passage that once Persephone enters the underworld, she no longer will see the other gods, including her mother.

42. The dark cloak Demeter puts on is a sign of her grief and, later, her anger (see Slatkin 1991: 92).

44–46. Demeter has only one clue, her daughter's scream. Her complete state of ignorance concerning her daughter for nine days is unlike the experience attributed to other gods. Zeus did not personally communicate his plan to her through any of the usual means: other gods, humans, or birds.

47. Deo is a shortened name for Demeter (see also 211, 492).

49. Demeter here abstains from god-food and god-drink (ambrosia and nectar) and later (210) breaks her fast with human drink.

57–58. Both goddesses, Hekate and Demeter, are in a state of ignorance; only Zeus, Hades, and Helios know what is going on.

64–73. Demeter supplicates Helios with a prayer as a mortal would, even though she reminds him of her divine status. As a goddess, she should already know what happened, but here she even needs to ask whether it was man or god who took her daughter.

82–87. Helios tries to reassure Demeter that Hades is an appropriate husband for Persephone; after all, Hades is Demeter's brother and a powerful ruler. In the original division after Zeus came to power, Zeus won the sky, Poseidon the sea, and Hades the underworld.

91–92. Demeter withdraws from Olympos because of her anger at Zeus for the secret arrangement, even though Hades

actually took Persephone. The whole middle part of the hymn has Demeter in human disguise.

99. Drawing water was women's duty. According to Richardson (1974: ad loc.), "Kallikhoron" (which means "lovely dancing") is another name for Maiden Well. At line 272, Demeter commands that her temple be built on the hill above Kallikhoron.

108. The daughters of Keleos look like goddesses, while the goddess Demeter looks like an old woman.

113-17. Keleos' daughters know that Demeter is not in the right place, sitting outside instead of inside a home (see Pratt 2000).

120-34. In literary Greek lies, such as Odysseus' in the *Odyssey*, often the speaker professes to tell the truth and mixes in some truthful element. While Demeter's story is indeed false, it blends in scraps of truth concerning the mother and daughter's situation. "Doso" means "I will give," which could be a true title for the grain goddess. A forcible kidnapping by pirates echoes Persephone's situation (124-25); Demeter is on the tenth day of her fast (129); and she certainly could see Zeus as an arrogant leader (131) whom she fled by leaving Olympos.

126. Thorikos is a town on the southern coast of the Attic peninsula.

138-40. Demeter asks for employment appropriate for an old woman, not hospitality.

153-55. Kallidike names the leaders of Eleusis, the key men with *timē* (honor), along with her father. In other versions, Triptolemos distributed Demeter's gift of agriculture and was an Athenian culture hero. Triptolemos and Eumolpos were the most prominent human figures in the Eleusinian Mysteries. The priest at Eleusis was drawn from the family of Eumolpos, whose name means "good singer." Diokles, Polyxeinos, and Dolikhos received hero sacrifices in cult worship.

164. Metaneira's "only son," Demophon, is the heir.

187. The hymn describes Persephone as Demeter's "blossom" (66) and Demophon as Metaneira's "new sprout," appropriate language in a story celebrating the goddess of vegetation.

188-90. Demeter reveals herself as a goddess, with her height and divine light. Yet, although Metaneira initially reacts with the appropriate emotions of awe, reverence, and fear (190), and offers the goddess her own royal throne (191), she immediately forgets the epiphany (213-23)—perhaps because "mortals have trouble seeing gods" (111).

195. The servant, Iambe, seems to understand Demeter's silent grief and does what she can to help (more below). She gives Demeter a low stool to sit on, since the goddess rejects the throne. Richardson notes (1974: 213): "She is the eponym of the iambic rhythm. . . . The original use of the iambic rhythm was probably religious, and connected especially with the festivals of Demeter and Dionysos. Archilochos, the first iambic poet, came from Paros, home of an important Demeter-cult (see ad *Dem.* 491) and of Baubo, Iambe's counterpart."

197-201. Demeter disguises herself in the palace to become the nurse for the queen's newborn son, but her grief for her daughter is unabated. She has not laughed, eaten, or drunk since she heard Persephone's cry.

202-5. Iambe's jokes help Demeter ease her grief. The jokes are probably obscene or sexual—Demeter is a fertility goddess. In an Orphic version, Baubo/Iambe exposes her genitals to Demeter, which makes the goddess laugh (Orphic fr. 52 K.). Baubo and obscene language are firmly connected with the Thesmophoria and other women-only festivals (see Clinton 1992; Brumfield 1996). Obscene jesting is often connected with rituals of mourning and fertility. In the Eleusinian Mysteries, the initiates participated in obscene jesting during their procession from Athens to Eleusis. The participants share not just Demeter's sorrow in the death of her daughter but also life-renewing laughter. Iambe clearly

helps Demeter: the goddess laughs and finally breaks her fast.

206-10. While Demeter turns down wine, associated with Dionysos, she accepts *kukeōn*, a drink of barley, water, and pennyroyal (a mint). Gods usually drink only nectar, yet here she drinks a human beverage, one appropriate to be offered to the grain goddess. The *kukeōn* was used in many rites connected with Demeter, including in the Eleusinian Mysteries, to break a fast.

227-30. Demeter promises to protect Metaneira's son from sickness, natural or supernatural, with spells. The "herb cutter" would be someone who cuts herbs for magical purposes. The repetitions in these lines sound incantatory.

235-39. Demeter feeds Demophon ambrosia, literally "not-mortal" food, as if he were a god, instead of giving him the usual human baby fare. Her breath as she holds him close also helps nourish him. At night, she burns off his mortality in a fire, in the attempt to make him immortal.

242-54. The story of Thetis and Achilles follows the same pattern: to immortalize her son by the mortal Peleus, the sea goddess Thetis fed Achilles ambrosia by day and placed him in a fire by night. Peleus cried out when he saw his son in the fire. Thetis set Achilles on the ground and left them both—and so Achilles remained mortal (Apollonius, *Argonautica* 4.869 ff.).

Setting the child on the ground after removing him from the fire seems connected to the *amphidromia* rite by which the father formally recognizes his child. In this ceremony, one or more people ran around (*amphidromia*) the hearth fire carrying the infant, before setting him directly on the ground (see Vernant 1983: 153).

259. Styx is the river in the underworld by which the gods swear their unbreakable oaths.

260-67. Demophon remains mortal, but he will be honored with some kind of annual ritual—probably one called *Ballētus*, which involved a mock battle.

268-74. Thwarted in her plan to make the queen's son her own immortal child, Demeter reveals herself and orders the Eleusinians to build her a temple. This passage seems more connected with the Thesmophoria than with the Mysteries, particularly in its emphasis on appeasement and its ritual language. In the Thesmophoria, sacrificial piglets are buried in pits, then later dug back up and their remains laid out on Demeter's altar—"lay out" (*hupothēsomai*) could refer to the *thesmoi* (objects laid down) that the participants carried (*phoros*) to the pits and altar.

305. Even though the people immediately obeyed her command to build a temple, Demeter lets them suffer by causing a harsh famine. Out of her grief for her daughter and anger at Zeus, Demeter is willing to sacrifice her human charges until Zeus gives in. Demeter has recalled her power as fertility goddess in order to go on strike.

314. Iris is the messenger and rainbow goddess.

335. Erebus is another word for the underworld or House of Hades. Hermes is the only one who can conduct Persephone back up.

344-45. The line is corrupt in the Greek; thus, the leap from Persephone to Demeter may not have been in the original.

346. "Slayer of Argos" is an epithet of Hermes.

362. Hades seems to expect Persephone to accept her arranged marriage, as human women would have. Persephone, however, does not accept her abduction as a marriage at all ("still unwilling," 344).

363-69. Before Hades lets Persephone go, he tells her of the powers and honors she will have as queen of the underworld. On earth, she is Demeter's daughter, with no separate *timē* (honor) of her own.

372. Hades also slips her some mortal food to bind her to him. The phrase could mean that Hades passes or waves the seed around Persephone, or even himself, in a magical gesture. Once she has eaten in the underworld, she must

return for a third of each year (399). On one hand, the pomegranate, full of juicy blood-red seeds, is a fertility symbol—eating the seed could represent the consummation of their marriage. On the other hand, women seem to have used pomegranate and pennyroyal (the mint in the *kukeōn*) as drugs to inhibit fertility (see Nixon 1995: 85–86)—and Persephone bore no children.

386. Maenads, literally “madwomen,” are the female worshippers of Dionysos. Mother and daughter are ecstatic to see each other again.

387–400. The bracketed words are supplements (Allen, Halliday, and Sykes 1936) to fill in a tear in the manuscript.

406. Persephone herself speaks for the first time—as noted above, the hymn is primarily from Demeter’s perspective.

418–24. Persephone names her playmates individually, including Athena and Artemis. Her companions were collectively described in line 4 as Ocean’s daughters.

434–37. This passage emphasizes the closeness of mother and daughter—they are practically one.

450. The Rarian plain was a sacred area near Eleusis.

470. Rhea reminds Demeter to return fertility to the land. At the end, the three generations of goddesses stand together with Hekate.

471–82. Demeter gives two gifts to human beings: she makes the earth fertile again and she reveals her sacred rites, the Mysteries, to prominent leaders in Eleusis. The hymn makes clear that whatever sacred event happened at the core of the Mysteries could not be spoken of to the uninitiated.

483–84. After Demeter gives her gifts to mortals, she returns to Olympos. At the beginning of the hymn, Demeter was ignorant of Zeus’ plan and seemed helpless to realize her powers. By the end, Demeter has realized the efficacy of her power to force Zeus to return her daughter. Demeter also has forged a crucial connection to human beings through the Mysteries and the Thesmophoria. Persephone has a crucial

role. Hades' trick with the pomegranate seed to keep Persephone for one-third of each year has made it possible for Persephone to cross the barriers between Olympos, earth, and the underworld. Therefore, Persephone can ensure that the initiates in the Mysteries do have a different lot after death. As queen of the underworld, she has the power to look after them then and to send them wealth while they are alive.

488. The name "Ploutos" means wealth, particularly agricultural prosperity. He is the son of Demeter and Iasion (*Odyssey* 5.125 ff.; Hesiod, *Theogony* 969 ff.)

491. Richardson remarks (1974: 321): "Paros was one of the most important centres of Demeter's cult." Antron is a town in Thessalia, a region in which Demeter was widely worshipped.

495. This final sentence is the most common concluding formula of the hymns. The poet, having remembered the goddess, will now continue to sing the remainder of the song, which might be a story about legendary heroes (see Bakker 2002).

3. APOLLO

In addition to being the god of music and prophecy, Apollo is the god of healing and sickness.

The *Hymn to Apollo* 3, like the *Hymn to Hermes* 4, celebrates the birth of a god and the establishment of his place in the pantheon. The first part (25-139) tells of Apollo's birth on Delos. The second part (214 ff.) moves to the establishment of Delphi, Apollo's first and most important oracular site. Many scholars have focused on the disjunction between the Delian (1-181) and Pythian (treating Delphi) sections of the hymn. While originally there may have been two separate hymns, the *Hymn to Apollo* presents a unified, though complex, song, in which each part of the narrative leads to the next. See Janko (1982: 99-115) and Stehle (1997:

178-96) on the hymns as originally separate, and Thalmann (1984: 64-73) and Bakker (2002) for their unity.

2. The opening shows that the other gods fear that the son-usurps-the-father pattern (as in Hesiod's *Theogony*) is still in effect. The whole hymn establishes that this is no longer so. Apollo is a new phenomenon: a loyal son. As such, Apollo's position of power is second only to that of his father, Zeus.

5. Leto's "seat by the side of Zeus, which she has usurped from Hera in this poem, indicates her high rank" (Stehle 1997: 179).

15. Apollo's sister, Artemis, the virgin mistress of wild animals, both hunting and caring for them, was born on Ortygia (16) or "Quail Island," which is identified as Rheneia (44), the island adjacent to Delos. She was born first and, in some versions, helped with Apollo's birth the next day.

16-18. The Greeks considered Delos the center of the Cyclades, islands that form a rough circle around Delos in the Aegean. Delos is a barren, rocky speck of an island. Kynthos, the peak of Delos, is a high hill; Inopos is a weak trickle of water running down it. Leto gave birth at the foot of Mount Kynthos, hanging on to the date palm (117).

19. According to the poet, there are a vast number of hymns about Apollo because he is a god worthy of so many hymns. It is a difficult task to find the right song for the god of song. The poet chooses to continue with the story of Apollo's birth.

20. "Phoibos," which means "radiant," is used either by itself as another name for Apollo or as an epithet (Phoibos Apollo).

29. Apollo's rule begins in Delos and spreads to all the other parts of Greece listed next. Leto searched for a birthplace in all these lands that Apollo later rules.

30-44. The catalogue of islands and coastlands covers a broad area of the Aegean, listed roughly clockwise in direction, with adjustments to fit the poetic meter.

Crete: The largest island at the southernmost end of the Aegean, Crete was associated with the Delian festival and with Delphi.

Athens: Crete to Athens is a rather large jump.

Aigina: An island just southwest of Athens.

Euboea: The long, narrow island northeast of Attica, with narrow straits on one side and the Aegean on the other.

Aigai: A common name, it probably refers to a town in Euboea on the Euboean Gulf.

Eiresiai: Unknown; probably near Aigai.

Peparethos: An island just north of Euboea.

Athos: Mountains on a peninsula extending northeast of Pelion.

Pelion: A mountain range northwest of Peparethos.

Samothrace: An island just south of Thrace.

Ida: A mountain range in Troas, south of Troy (in northwest modern-day Turkey).

Skyros: An island east of Euboea.

Phocaea: A city on the coast on Asia Minor, south of Lesbos (37). Lesbos is the large island south of Ida (and was the birthplace of the lyric poet Sappho).

Autokane: A mainland port across from the south point of Lesbos, north of Phokaia.

Imbros: An island southeast of Samothrace.

Lemnos: An island southwest of Imbros.

Makar: "Makar" means "blessed," which is a common epithet of the gods. According to Homer (*Iliad* 24.544), Makar, son of Aiolos, the wind god, was king of Lesbos.

Chios: An island south of Lesbos. Chios was traditionally regarded as the birthplace of Homer (172).

Mimas: A mountain on the mainland opposite Chios.

Korykos: A mountain south of Mimas.

Klaros: A sanctuary on the coast of Asia Minor east of Korykos, just north of Ephesus.

Aisagee: Unknown.

Samos: An island close to the mainland, south of Klaros.

Mykale: A mountain east of Samos on the mainland.

Miletos: A coastal city just south of Mount Mykale.

Kos: An island in the Sporades, south of Miletos, inhabited by the Meropes.

Knidos: The peninsula jutting out south of Kos.

Karpathos: An island south of Kos, toward Crete.

Naxos and Paros: The two islands south of Delos (see *Dionysos* 1.2 and *Demeter* 2.491).

Rheneia: Artemis' birth island, to the immediate west of Delos (also called Ortygia, 16).

47-49. Now we find out why Leto had to journey so far—all the personified lands were afraid to let Apollo be born on them.

51-60. Leto tries to persuade Delos to allow her to give birth there. She argues that since Delos' soil is so poor, a temple to Apollo would bring in important revenue. Visitors to the temple will bring offerings that enrich and feed the surrounding populace. The other, fertile lands (48) could afford to turn her down.

In a version referred to in Callimachus' *Hymn to Delos*, Delos originally was a daughter of Titans, who fled into the sea to avoid being raped by Zeus. She turned into a floating island, who took root only after Apollo's birth.

62. Leto's father, Koios, is a Titan, one of Ouranos and Gaia's sons.

67-78. Delos explains why she is afraid of Apollo: she has heard that the new god will be violent and arrogant toward gods and mortals. Delos fears that as soon as Apollo is born, he will destroy her, sinking her in the sea, and build his temple elsewhere.

79-82. Delos agrees to be Apollo's birthplace if Leto will swear that Apollo's first temple and oracle will be on Delos.

86-87. Leto swears that Apollo will build his temple on Delos. She doesn't mention the oracle, which is reserved for

Delphi.

93. In Homer, Dione is the mother of Aphrodite.

94. Themis is the goddess of law and justice; Amphitrite is Poseidon's wife.

95. Hera is first mentioned here as the goddess who is not attending the laboring Leto. See *Hera* 12 and *Aphrodite* 5.40-44 for hymns that mention Hera's equality with Zeus.

97. Eileithyia, the birth goddess, must be present for Leto to give birth. Hera distracts her from knowing about Leto because Hera is jealous that Leto is giving birth to a powerful son of Zeus, her own husband (100-101).

120. The women raised the ritual cry of joy at a birth; they ululated (*ololuxan*).

123-24. Leto did not nurse Apollo. Instead, Themis fed the newborn Apollo nectar and ambrosia, the food of the gods. The effect was instantaneous: as soon as Apollo ate, he shook off his baby clothes (127-29), made a programmatic statement (131-32), and "strode" (134) off to begin his travels as a full-grown adult.

131-32. Apollo's first words proclaim his place among gods and humans. Apollo is the god of two stringed instruments: the lyre, plucked with a pick (plectrum), represents Apollo's sphere of music (including song and dance), and the bow Apollo's killing and healing powers. As the Destroyer, Apollo shoots plague into the Greek camp in the *Iliad*; and he is also the Healer.

The second line provides the focus for the poem from line 182 on: Apollo's role as god of prophecy. Apollo knows Zeus' "unerring will" or "unerring counsel" (132, 253, 293) and will communicate it to human beings. Thus Apollo has a crucial role in connecting the human and divine; through his oracles, he provides signs of Zeus' will to clueless humans.

136-39. Lines 136-38 appear only in the text of one manuscript and seem to be a variant for line 139. Although it seems unlikely that both versions would have been sung together in antiquity, the four lines work together nicely to

emphasize the amazing gilding of Delos in her joy at Apollo's birth.

146-78. This passage celebrating Apollo's gift of song in the human realm refers to the annual festival to Apollo on Delos, when the Ionian Greeks from the islands and coastland off Asia Minor would gather to worship Apollo.

157-61. The Delian chorus was famous; here, they are like human Muses in their skill. At a festival to Apollo and in a hymn to Apollo, it makes sense for them to begin their song with Apollo and then move on to his mother and sister. The second part of their song would be an "epic tale" about legendary heroes. The Greek uses the same word for hymns such as the *Hymn to Apollo* and epics such as Homer's *Iliad*—in performance, the hymn would precede the epic (see Bakker 2002).

162-64. The singers are so skilled that they can imitate all the various Greek dialects and even the sound effects of the castanets accompanying the dance.

165-78. The poet hails the Delian singers directly and says that they will remember him as the best bard, that he will spread their fame, and that he will always hymn Apollo. Usually at the end of the hymns, the poet says "farewell" (*khaire*, "rejoice," "hail") to the god and promises to remember him or her. Here the poet says farewell to the Delian girls and asks them to remember him. At line 178, the poet affirms that he will now continue (not stop) singing this hymn to Apollo, the "skillful Archer" (literally, who "attains his aim" or whose "arrows never miss"). See Miller (1986).

179. Lykia and Maionia are two districts in western Asia Minor.

183. With the reference to Pytho, another name for Delphi, the hymn will move toward the tale of how Apollo established Delphi. But first, the hymn shows Apollo's ascent to Olympus (186-87) and the effect of his music on the gods (188-206). The beginning of the hymn (2-18) also describes Apollo's arrival on Olympus; this repetition, called "ring composition,"

is a traditional feature of early Greek poetry (note the identical transitional lines, 19 and 207, as well).

189. The nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (Memory), the Muses, are the goddesses of poetic inspiration and the arts (later, all intellectual pursuits). Their song of the gifts and sufferings that the gods bestow on hapless humans is quite different from the song of the Delian girls (158-64).

194. The three Graces, or Charites, are often associated with Apollo and the Muses (see *Hymn to the Muses, Apollo, and Zeus* 25).

The Horai are the goddesses of seasons, hours, and time. The Graces and Horai are usually portrayed dancing, singing, and playing instruments.

195. Aphrodite is the goddess of sexuality. See *Hymns to Aphrodite* 5, 6, and 10.

The daughter of Aphrodite and the war god Ares, Harmonia was married to the mortal Kadmos, father of Semele (for Semele, see *Dionysos* 1).

Hebe is the daughter of Hera and Zeus, and her name means "youth." She married Herakles (15.8) when he became immortal.

200. Ares, son of Zeus and Hera, is the god of war, especially blood-thirsty war, although *Hymn to Ares* 8 provides a broader perspective.

207-13. Before the poet focuses on the founding of Delphi, he teases his audience with some of the various episodes concerning Apollo that the song could have turned to. The references are obscure, but the gist is Apollo's rivalry with men for the affection of one woman or more. No myths portray Apollo as lucky in love.

209-10. Iskhos was Apollo's rival for Koronis. In a popular version, Apollo killed Koronis because she betrayed him with a mortal man when pregnant with Asklepios.

211. Phorbas and Ereutheus may have been other suitors of Koronis or Apollo's rivals for someone else.

212. Leukippos competed with Apollo for Daphne's affections: neither god nor man was successful.

213. The reference is unclear.

214-26. Apollo matches Leto's earlier journey with one of his own as he searches for a place appropriate to build his most important prophetic center. Delphi is directly south of Pieria, home of the Muses; Apollo travels southward, then swings east through Euboea, before heading west to Mount Parnassus.

Pieria: The region in northern Greece, south of Macedonia, that contains Mount Olympos.

Lekton: Unidentified.

Ainianes: These people lived at the source of the Spercheios river that flows into the Malian Gulf, across from the northern tip of Euboea.

Perraiboi: These people lived at Larissa, just south of Pieria. The order of the Ainianes and Perraiboi is reversed for metrical reasons.

Iolkos: A city on the coast near Mount Pelion, north of Euboea.

Kenaion: A cape on the northwest tip of Euboea.

Lelanton: The fertile plain in Euboea, across the Euripos strait from Boeotia on the mainland.

Mykalessos: Apollo continues his course west through Boeotia, passing through the towns Mykalessos and Teumessos.

Thebes: Apollo continues through the forested spot that very early in Greek history became the important city of Thebes.

230-38. Located on the south shore of Lake Copais in Boeotia, Onchestos was the site of a famous sacred grove of Poseidon. Only this hymn describes the ritual in honor of Poseidon, the god of horses and water. Perhaps the participants in this rite could divine the god's will from the horses or the chariot offerings.

Moirai (238) is the goddesses Destiny.

240-43. The geography is tangled here.

Kephisos: A river pouring into Lake Copais.

Lilaia: A town at the northern foot of Mount Parnassus.

Okaleia: A town near Haliartos.

Haliartos: A town west of Onchestos, following the same path toward Delphi.

244. Telphusa is both a spring at the foot of Mount Helicon and a nymph.

247-55. Mother and son end their journeys differently. Leto asks Delos' permission to give birth there and receives it. When Apollo chooses Telphusa to be the site of his temple, he abruptly informs her of his decision and starts building.

250. Europe here refers to the mainland north of the Peloponnesus.

256. Apollo's arrogance angers Telphusa, but she hides it because he is so much more powerful than she (267-68). She persuades him that her spring has too much traffic for his purposes (262-66) and that a port town off the Gulf of Corinth below the next mountain over (Krisa at the foot of Mount Parnassus, 269) will be much better. She neglects to mention the ferocious female dragon inhabiting that prime location.

273. Iepaeon is a title of Apollo as the healer god, and also is applied to the song (paeon) sung in worship of him (500, 517). Paeans were sung in competitions at Delphi; those competitions became the core of the Pythian Games, paralleling the Olympic Games.

275-76. The narrative explains Telphusa's reason for deceiving Apollo as her desire to keep the glory of that spot only for herself. The Greek word for "glory" is *kleos*, which means fame or glory retold in song or story.

278. Phlegyans lived in the city of Panopeos, west of Lake Copais in Boeotia.

295-96. Erginos' sons, Trophonius and Agamedes, represent the epitome of architects. Other people finished the temple.

301-4. Apollo will kill the female dragon at lines 357-70. In other versions, the dragon/snake is male. These earlier lines establish that Apollo is the dragon slayer and that the dragon needs to be slain. According to the hymn, she is an evil monster who destroyed men and their domestic stock.

305-55. Typhon is a hundred-headed snakelike monster described in the same terms as the dragon: they are evil banes (304, 352) and destructive to humans (303, 355). This fifty-line digression in the middle of the story of Apollo slaying the dragon shows that the dragon was so evil that she was the appropriate nurse or foster mother for Typhon. It also returns to Hera's antagonism toward Zeus' patriarchal order and Zeus' children born to other goddesses and mortals once she was his wife (as seen in the Leto episode earlier).

In Hesiod's *Theogony* (821-22), Typhon (many spellings) was the last child of Gaia (Earth) and Tartaros (Underworld). According to Hesiod (837), Typhon would have displaced Zeus to become the ruler of humans and gods, but Zeus conquered him and banished him to Tartaros. Typhon and the dragon both were hostile to Zeus' order and thus to his spokesman, Apollo. Typhon, however, is immortal, while the dragon is not. In the *Hymn to Apollo*, the dragon episode provides Apollo with a chance to have a heroic exploit appropriate to a loyal son—killing a female dragon identified with Hera, rather than battling his father.

The hymn gives Typhon's parentage, but not the dragon's. Later sources have the dragon originally a guardian of Gaia's temple; that temple later became Themis' before Apollo took over. See Fontenrose (1959) on Typhon and dragon combat.

307-9. Hera conceives Typhon on her own, without any help from Zeus, out of rage at Zeus for bearing Athena on his own. In Hesiod's *Theogony* (888-98), Zeus swallows his first wife, Metis (Intelligence), when she is pregnant with Athena, to prevent the conception of a son who would conquer him. Zeus then gives birth to Athena from his own head (924; see *Hymn to Athena* 28). Typhon could be seen as the attempt of

Gaia (*Theogony* 820-68) and Hera (*Hymn to Apollo* 3.327) to give birth to the son who could overthrow Zeus.

316. In Hesiod, Hera gives solo birth to Hephaistos, the lame smith god, in her anger at Zeus. Here, Hephaistos is the son of Zeus and Hera.

317-21. Hera despises her “weakling” son, Hephaistos, and throws him off Mount Olympos. Thetis, the sea goddess mother of Achilles, nurses him back to health. Because Thetis’ son was destined to be more powerful than his father, Zeus forced Thetis to marry a mortal man, Peleus.

334-35. Hera prays for help from Gaia and Ouranos and their children, the Titans, who fought Zeus. She wants a child greater than Zeus to conquer him (338-39), just as Zeus conquered his father, Kronos.

356-57. The narrative returns to Apollo slaying the dragon, who always killed whatever people or animals happened upon her.

358-70. Apollo shoots the dragon in one line, but it takes her thirteen lines to die.

367. Typhon mated with Echidna, a goddess half snake, half woman, who bore the Hydra (a many-headed water serpent), the mother of Chimera, a fire-breathing, three-headed combination of snake/dragon, lion, and goat (Hesiod, *Theogony* 319). Apollo taunts the dragon that neither her foster child nor any related immortal monsters can save her from death.

372. Apollo names his new site Pytho, which means “rot,” because the dragon’s body rotted there in the heat of the sun.

375-87. Once Apollo kills the dragon, he realizes that Telphusa tricked him. In his fury, he destroys her spring and marks the spot for himself with an altar. This incident explains why Apollo has the title Telphusian. Apollo is capable of the destructive rage that Delos feared.

389. Now that Apollo has founded Delphi, he needs priests to run it. From line 388 to the end, the hymn tells the story of

how Apollo hi-jacked a ship from Crete and pressed the sailors into being his priests.

393-96. There was a cult of Apollo Delphinios (the dolphin) at the great palace city on Crete, Knossos; according to legend, Knossos was ruled by King Minos, son of Zeus and Europa. Thus we call the pre-Hellenic civilization on Crete the Minoan Civilization.

These four lines summarize the duties of the Cretan priests at Delphi: they perform sacrifices to Apollo and announce his oracles. This hymn focuses on the patriarchal order of Zeus and Apollo against destructive female forces: the wholly evil female dragon and Hera's attempts to disrupt Zeus' plans that are foiled by his overthrow of Typhon and the successful birth of Apollo. Absent from this hymn are the female Pythia—in historical times, the medium possessed by Apollo to speak his oracles, which were then inscribed in verse by the priests and given to the recipient—and traditions that Delphi originally was an oracle of Gaia and then Themis before Apollo took over. Perhaps a Minoan-type snake goddess originally was worshipped at Delphi; such worship might help explain why the priests are Cretan.

397-98. The Cretans were merchant sailors, planning to conduct business at Pylos. The Pylos mentioned here must be the one in the northwestern Peloponnesus in the district of Elis.

409-29. Apollo, in the guise of a dolphin, guides the ship in clockwise direction around the Peloponnesus from Cape Malea, the southeastern point, into the Gulf of Corinth.

The Laconian district includes Sparta.

422-29. Although the ship sails north along the western coast of the Peloponnesus, the places listed in the hymn are not in geographical sequence.

Arena: Either Erana in Messenia, west of Laconia, or Samikon, a town more to the north (toward Olympia) in the Elis district in the westernmost Peloponnesus.

Argyphea: Unknown.

Thryon: Epitalion, a city on the Alpheos river, by Olympia.

Aepy: A town nearby.

Cruni and Chalcis: Rivers that ran south of Alpheos.

Dyme: A town north of Elis.

Phera: A common name; this could be the Phara east of Dyme. Zeus helps Apollo bring the Cretans to Delphi; after all, the oracles are signs of Zeus' will.

Ithaca: Odysseus' home, an island west of the Gulf of Corinth, in the Ionian Sea.

Dulichium, Same, Zacynthus: Dulichium (Leucas?) and Zacynthus are islands near Ithaca; Same is a town opposite Ithaca on the island Cephallania.

431. The ship continues around the Peloponnesus to enter the long Gulf of Corinth.

451. Apollo initially addresses the Cretans as if he were any man questioning strangers. His first four lines repeat the traditional question to sailors (cf. *Odyssey* 3.71-74, 9.252-55).

463. The Cretan leader sees that Apollo looks more like a god than a human, but still believes that he is speaking with a human. Otherwise, why ask the gods to bless the questioner (466)? The leader does know that a god brought them to Krisa and emphasizes that it was "against our will" (473; see also 471). His tale resembles Demeter's story to the daughters of Keleos about being captured from Crete by pirates against her will (*Demeter* 2.122-25).

529-30. Like Delos, Delphi is rocky and infertile. The Cretans have a legitimate concern that they might have trouble making a living off the land while acting as servants of Apollo's temple.

532-33. Human concerns seem foolish to the gods (*Demeter* 2.256-58). Apollo says that they are always looking for trouble. He reassures them that all the people who come to worship Apollo will bring offerings (535-37), which will enable the priests to live in luxury.

538-89. These two lines, probably together with a missing third line, reiterate the priests' tasks: they must take care of Apollo's temple, welcome and serve (530) the people who come seeking divine insight, and, most important, follow Apollo's instructions. If they do these things, then they will be honored (483-85), know the gods' will, and live well.

540-43. The priests are warned to behave appropriately—if they do or say anything rashly, forgetting Apollo's "direction" (539), then they will be ruled by other men. This could mean that Delphi would be corrupted and the oracles inspired by politics or payment rather than the god. Or perhaps it refers to the contemporary situation: the supplanting of Cretan priests by the local female priestess, the Pythia.

"Arrogant violence" translates the Greek word *hubris*, which literally means violent action based on an arrogance of attitude, not merely "pride" as it is commonly used today. Line 541 reads "the *hubris* that is *themis* among mortals." In some ways, *themis* is the opposite of *hubris*. Themis, the goddess of law and justice, feeds the newborn Apollo (124); she represents right actions toward men and gods. In line 541, *themis* means "customary": Apollo says that *hubris*, rash speech and actions, are common practice or even habitual for human beings. For the priests to remain true to their charge, however, they will have to live exemplary lives guided by divine will (see Miller 1986: 103-8).

4. HERMES

Like the *Hymn to Apollo* 3, the *Hymn to Hermes* celebrates the birth of a god and the establishment of his place in the pantheon. The two hymns are opposite in tone, however. The *Hymn to Hermes* reveals Hermes' character, showing how this trickster—"a wily child with a seductive mind" (13)—gains the goods and honors that he desires. Hermes uses whatever methods succeed: theft, deception, magic, lies, persuasion, and force. These strategies illustrate Hermes' function as god of commerce, inventions, skillful use of

language, luck, music, thieves, travel, boundaries, and herds. He is the guide of travelers and the conductor of souls into the house of Hades.

Most of the action of the hymn centers around Hermes' invention of the lyre, his theft of Apollo's cattle, and their settling of accounts. Its humor lies primarily in the contrast between the depiction of Hermes as a newborn infant and his actions, and in the initial conflict between Apollo and Hermes. The virile god Apollo, established god of the lyre and prophecy, is here bested by the cunning of his newborn half-brother. In *Hymn to Apollo* 3 and in all other literary references, the lyre is Apollo's signature instrument, established before Hermes' birth. In *Hymn to Hermes* 4, the lyre is Hermes' own invention, never heard before by Apollo. The sound of the lyre persuades Apollo to give Hermes whatever he wants, except Zeus' gift of oracular prophecy. Hermes gives Apollo the lyre and a promise not to steal from him. Apollo gives Hermes the cows, a magic wand (the caduceus), the prophetic Bee Maidens, and other honors. The brothers move from rivalry to permanent friendship, and Hermes wins an honored place among the Olympian gods.

1. Maia is a minor goddess, daughter of Atlas and one of the Pleiades.

2. Kyllene is a mountain in Arcadia, a district in the center of the Peloponnesus.

3. Hermes is the god most associated with luck and profit; the epithet here translated "luck-bringing" (*eriounion*) might also mean "swift."

4. Here "nymph" means a minor goddess, but the word can also mean a spirit between human and divine, or even simply a human bride.

6. That Maia lives in a cave, rather than on Mount Olympus, shows her low status.

19. The fourth day was considered lucky.

25. Immediately after his birth, Hermes turns a mountain tortoise that he chances upon into the lyre, a stringed musical

instrument. This is the first of Hermes' three main inventions in the hymn: lyre, fire sticks (109-10), and panpipes (512).

31. Hermes addresses the tortoise as if she were a *hetaira*, a paid female companion.

36. This proverb appeared first in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (365). Of course, Hermes uses the proverb ironically, since he plans to kill the tortoise inside his house, while she was sale grazing outside.

37-38. The live tortoise is a charm against evil spells; the dead tortoise becomes the lyre.

47-51. These lines precisely describe the making of a tortoiseshell lyre: the cowhide tautly covers the hollow of the shell, "the lengths of reed . . . support the stretched hide surface," the arms ("originally they were the horns of an animal," but not here) are set into the shell parallel to each other, and a crossbar is fitted across the two arms, joining them (Anderson 1994: 54-55). Then the sheep-gut strings are stretched between the crossbar and the tortoiseshell base.

53. The pick is a plectrum (*plektron*).

55. At a symposium, men, while drinking, would challenge each other to sing.

59. Hermes sings a hymn to himself on his new instrument: an improvisation on an improper subject, his own conception.

62. After Hermes invents the lyre, he returns to his original desire to steal Apollo's cattle.

70. Mount Olympos is in Pieria in northern Greece, south of Macedonia. Hermes makes a very long journey from his home in Arcadia to Pieria to Pylos (where he hides the cattle) and back to Arcadia.

71. Out of all the divine cattle, Hermes only steals Apollo's: "Hermes chooses to raid his wealthiest and most influential brother" because of the prestige Apollo's eventual friendship will bring (Haft 1996: 28).

73. The epithet *Argeiphontēs* means either "Slayer of Argos" or "Dog Slayer." Hermes won the title Slayer of Argos when he killed, at Zeus' request, the many-eyed giant Argos,

who was guarding Io for Hera. Zeus had raped Io and then turned her into a cow; Argos originally may have been a guard dog. See Chittenden (1948).

77-78. This is the first of three magic tricks: here Hermes makes the cows walk backward; later, he enters his house through the keyhole (146), and then makes the willow boughs take root and grow over the cows (410-12).

79-85. Hermes whips together some snowshoe sandals so that he can easily skate over the sand and cover his tracks. Gods usually fly.

87. The old man that Hermes meets along his way is the only human in the poem.

92-93. Hermes uses a proverb: See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil, since it's none of your business. While Hermes warns the old man not to tell on him, he never imposes any punishment when Apollo is told. Actually, it is essential for the story that Apollo find out about the theft—only then can Hermes acquire the honors that he desires. In addition to Apollo's respect, Hermes wants Zeus to recognize him as his son (312). See Haft (1996: 36); Tzifopoulos (2000: 158).

99. Selene, the moon, is the daughter of Hyperion in Hesiod's *Theogony* and in *Hymn to Helios* 31.

109. Hermes uses the laurel, Apollo's own tree and his symbol, to start the fire in which he cooks Apollo's cows (I am grateful to Molly O'Connor for making this observation in a 2002 class).

128. Hermes prepares an offering or feast for the twelve gods, including himself.

130-33. As in line 64, Hermes desires to eat meat. As a god he should not be craving meat—gods eat nectar and ambrosia. Hermes is the god of feasts and moves in the outside spaces of the human realm, beyond the hearth of Hestia fixed at the center of the household. He lives “among mortals on terms of intimacy” as “the mediator between mortals and the gods” (Vernant 1983: 129). The god who crosses boundaries understands human desires. Yet if

Hermes is going to work his way up from his cave to Mount Olympus successfully, he needs to resist the part of his nature that might lead him to associate too closely with humans.

134-35. Hermes either leaves the meat and fat hanging in midair or places them on a rocky ledge.

166. Hermes' art, *tekhnē*, is his skill at trickery, magic, theft, invention, and language. The root of the word here translated as "serve" means "tend cattle."

169. The Oxford text (Allen, Halliday, and Sikes 1936) has "prayers" (*alistoi*) instead of the other emendation suggested, "food" (*apastoi*).

183. The aegis is a goatskin cloak or shield of power that only Zeus and his representative, Athena, can use.

199. In this hymn devoted to Hermes, the great god Apollo is forced to ask a human for help in finding his cattle.

201-5. The old man first makes a general statement on the difficulty of trusting or understanding what one sees.

208-11. Then he expresses doubt and amazement concerning what he saw: a baby driving cattle backward. Apollo had expected to discover that a man had stolen his cattle.

212-14. Apollo could not interpret this information before seeing a bird omen. Even then, he still goes to Pylos to find his cattle, rather than directly to Hermes' cave.

216. The Pylos mentioned here must be the one in the northwestern Peloponnesus, near the Alpheos river.

219-26. When Apollo first sees the tracks of his cattle and of Hermes, the cattle seem to be returning back to their meadow, and he doesn't recognize the prints of Hermes' strange sandals at all.

256. Tartaros is another name for the House of Hades, the underworld. Apollo immediately turns to force.

259. The "little men" are children or other worthless dead in the underworld.

294-97. To resist Apollo, Hermes sends out two omens: a fart and a sneeze. The Greeks believed that many things were

signs of divine will, including birds of prey and unexpected bodily noises. Apollo properly interprets Hermes' omens and drops him.

319. The two sons of Zeus, Apollo and Hermes, reach a stalemate. Hermes is *polumētis* (i.e., has much cunning intelligence), while Apollo is *polumēchanos* (i.e., has many resources).

354-55. Apollo does not tell the truth. The old man did not see or tell Apollo where Hermes brought the cattle. Apollo guesses that the cattle are in Pylos.

368. Hermes does tell the truth, of a sort. He did not drive the cows to his house (379): he hid them in the cave. He did not walk over his threshold (380): he turned into mist and slipped in through the keyhole. Hermes, god of tricky language, knows that only the literal meaning of oaths binds one.

403. At the sight of the sacrificed cows, Apollo decides that Hermes is already too powerful and so tries to tie him up. The bindings instantly drop off Hermes (410); but before Apollo can try any other violence, Hermes reveals the lyre (418).

415-16. The gleam of fire is the sparkle in Hermes' eyes. Hermes wants to distract Apollo.

427-28. Hermes' second song is his theogony, telling of the birth of the gods.

429. The name "Mnemosyne" means "memory."

478-88. Hermes refers to the lyre as a *hetaira* and instructs Apollo in her proper care. If one approaches the lyre properly, with knowledge, she sings beautifully. If one treats her roughly, she won't. Hermes and Apollo share the gift of music and the gift of herding cattle (491, 498). The herds will become more fruitful under Hermes' care, and both gods will come out ahead.

512. In another version (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.689-712), a nymph named Syrinx turned into marsh reeds in order to avoid the god Pan. Pan cut some of the reeds into

different lengths and attached them together to create “panpipes.”

526. There may be a gap in the text between lines 526 and 527.

541-49. In the *Hymn to Apollo*, Apollo’s charge is to “proclaim to humans the unerring will of Zeus” (3.132). The *Hymn to Hermes*, however, declares that Apollo confuses humans by sometimes giving them true omens and sometimes false. Just as those who improperly turn to the lyre receive no wisdom, those who turn to prophecy contrary to Apollo’s will may be deceived.

552. The three “holy sisters” are bees, who give true prophecies when fed with honey. These Bee Maidens probably are bees associated with the Corycian nymphs, who lived in a cave seven miles from Delphi below Mount Parnassus (see Larson 1995). Humans can learn this form of prophecy (565).

569-73. In the possible gap between lines 568 and 569, the speaker may change from Apollo to Zeus, since Zeus is the appropriate god to grant Hermes the gifts named here.

5. APHRODITE

Aphrodite in this hymn is the daughter of Zeus, as in the *Iliad*, not the Aphrodite from Hesiod’s *Theogony*, who was born from the castrated genitals of Ouranos (Heaven) mixed with sea foam (*aphros*). The *Hymn to Aphrodite* both celebrates the goddess’s power of sexuality and shows how Zeus limits that power. Before the story in the hymn takes place, Aphrodite controls the sex life of the great god Zeus by making him, and other gods, desire and mate with humans. The narrative shows how Zeus puts a stop to that. Zeus weakens Aphrodite’s power by infecting her with the same desire with which she has infected the other gods: he makes her long for a human, Anchises. This hymn suggests that

their son, Aeneas, is the last of the mortal children born of the gods' unions with humans.

2. Aphrodite is closely associated with the islands Cyprus (west of Syria) and Cythera (south of the Peloponnesus) and so is often called the Cyprian or Cypris, or Cytheria (6).

6-7. Aphrodite aroused desire in all gods, humans, and beasts, except for the three virgin goddesses described below.

8. Athena is the goddess of war and crafts, kingship, crafts, and the olive tree. According to Hesiod's *Theogony* (886-900), Zeus swallowed his first wife, Metis (Intelligence), when she was pregnant with Athena, to prevent Metis from conceiving a son who would overthrow his rule. Athena was born from Zeus' head. See *Hymns to Athena* 11 and 28.

11. The "glorious work" (*erga*, 14) of women in the house echoes the "glorious deeds" (*erga*) of war. Athena honors both.

17. The loud sound translated as "baying" could be Artemis shouting in the hunt, rather than the noise of her dogs; Artemis' "golden distaff" (18) could also be translated "golden arrows." See *Hymns to Artemis* 9 and 27.

21-23. Although few myths about Hestia exist, the goddess of the hearth was worshipped widely, both publicly and privately. According to Hesiod (*Theogony* 454), she was the firstborn child of Kronos and Rhea. Kronos swallowed his children as soon as they were born to prevent them from conquering him—all except his lastborn, Zeus, whom Rhea hid away. When Zeus conquered his father, he forced Kronos to regurgitate those siblings in reverse order. Hestia was the first born from Rhea, and thus she was also the last born from Kronos. See *Hestia* 24 and *Hestia and Hermes* 29.

24. No other surviving literature records the marriage proposals by Poseidon and Apollo.

36. The crux of the matter: Aphrodite has power even over Zeus, which he cannot allow to continue.

53. Anchises is descended from the Trojan Dardanos (177), Zeus' favorite son born from mortal women (*Iliad* 20.304-5). As Aeneas proclaims in the *Iliad* (20.215-40), Dardanos' grandson is Tros (in this poem, 207)—the father of Ganymede (202) and great-grandfather of Anchises, and of Priam and his brother Tithonos (218).

56. Aphrodite does not seem to be aware of Zeus' plan until after the fact.

58-65. Before Aphrodite approaches Anchises, she makes herself irresistible, like a warrior arming for battle (for example, Achilles in *Iliad* 19.364-91). The three Graces anoint her with ambrosia (63), the liquid that sustains the gods.

84-90. The disguise is not fully persuasive. Not only has Aphrodite appeared out of nowhere on the mountain, but her beauty, clothes, and jewelry are more than human. The use of clothing and jewelry to represent power is very old. In a hymn concerning Aphrodite's Sumerian precursor, Inanna, the goddess girds herself in full finery to descend to the underworld (Wolkstein and Kramer 1983: 52-53). See the note to lines 162-65, below.

91-106. Anchises is struck with desire when he sees the goddess, but he prays to her in a respectful manner. Better to err by treating her as a divinity: if Aphrodite really is the human woman she claims to be, she won't be insulted by this greeting.

92-99. He names a list of goddesses that she might be, which includes the correct guess, as well as suggesting the possibility that she might be a nymph. "Nymph" here refers to the tree or mountain spirits who are like the gods, but who eventually do die.

100. Anchises follows the proper prayer formula: first he tries to address her by name, then he offers her something (an altar and regular animal sacrifice), before making his request.

103-6. He asks for honor among his people, a healthy son, and a long, happy life. These are not the usual requests from an epic “hero” (76), which tend to focus on glory in battle. Compare Achilles’ choice of a short life with fame (*kleos*), rather than a long life without, or Hektor’s prayer for his son (*Iliad* 9.412-16, 6.476-81; see Smith 1981: 47-48).

109-42. Like Demeter’s lie to the daughters of Keleos (*Demeter* 2.122-25) and Odysseus’ many lies in the *Odyssey*, Aphrodite’s false tale succeeds in eliciting the exact response she desires. Her speech to Anchises is skillful, although her appearance alone probably persuades him.

111-16. Aphrodite gives herself a human family, naming as her father the king of Phrygia in Asia, and supplies a reason for her ability to speak Trojan. This is the earliest text that notes language differences (Smith 1981: 50).

117-29. She proceeds to explain, in an outlandish tale, how she ended up on the mountain and insists that the gods themselves have arranged her marriage to Anchises. That Hermes stole her from a dance to Artemis explains her fancy attire and emphasizes her desirability and marriageable age. Anchises has just said that he wants a son (104); Aphrodite tells him that Hermes kidnapped her to provide him just that.

130-42. The last third of Aphrodite’s speech works on two levels. It ostensibly stresses the need to bring the two families into the social function of a proper wedding, which will include a large payment for her safety. Yet it primarily emphasizes her vulnerability and sexual availability.

145-54. Anchises’ reply shows his uncertainty. He doesn’t quite believe her, but he is too overwhelmed with desire to do anything other than act as if he does believe her. His words are framed as a conditional statement: *if* what you say is true, *then* let’s make love now (even if I die afterward if you really are a goddess). See Smith (1981: 55-57).

156-57. Aphrodite acts the shy virgin, modestly lowering her eyes and slowly letting herself be led to bed.

159-60. The mention of the ferocious animals killed by Anchises helps make him appear more in charge and manly, rather than the passive target of Aphrodite's seduction.

162-65. Anchises, in undressing Aphrodite piece by piece, in effect symbolically strips her of her power until she appears as a naked human woman. In the hymn to Inanna (see the note to lines 84-90, above), the sequence of stripping the goddess occurs as Inanna reaches the seven gates leading down to the underworld. Inanna is forced to take off one item at each gate, until she is "naked and bowed low" (Wolkstein and Kramer 1983: 57-60; quotation, 60). Note that Aphrodite dresses while Anchises sleeps (170-71); only when she is again clothed does she reveal herself as a goddess (172-76).

167. This line immediately recalls that she is an immortal goddess different in nature from the human man she beds. Both goddess and man are "uncertain of the truth." Anchises doesn't know with whom he is having sex. Note that she does not provide even a false name, and he does not press her for it.

182. Aphrodite purposely frightens Anchises—just the effect she tried to *avoid* before.

188-90. Anchises fears that one bout with the love goddess could permanently drain him of his sexual energy and seed (see Giacomelli 1980: 16-19).

196-99. Aphrodite tells Anchises that he will have the son he prayed for. But she names that son Aeneas after her "terrible" (*ainos*) sorrow. He will be a constant reminder of her contact with mortality.

200-201. Anchises' family is rich in men with divine beauty, which has attracted other gods.

202. The story of Ganymede would seem to be a positive example of a human who was granted immortality and eternal youth. Yet Ganymede has no choice in the matter—he was kidnapped—and his father, Tros, "grieved without end" (209) before learning the fate of his son and receiving a

ransom of immortal horses. Though the exemplum ends happily with Tros rejoicing (217), Ganymede forever remains the adolescent cupbearer to the gods, never maturing into an adult man (Smith 1981: 72-74).

218. Tithonos' story, unlike that of Ganymede, is unambiguously negative because his immortality comes with eternal aging. His immortal life is divided into three stages: a happy youth with Dawn (225-27), a celibate maturity with Dawn (228-32), and an eternal old age, paralyzed in solitary confinement (233-36). As Dawn's husband in the *Iliad* (11.1) and *Odyssey* (5.1), Tithonos' age isn't mentioned. In a version later than the hymn, Tithonos turns into a cricket.

231. Tithonos consumes human bread and divine ambrosia because he is an ever-aging and powerless immortal.

237. Although Tithonos cannot move, his voice stays strong and persistent.

241. Because (in this hymn) only Zeus grants immortality, Aphrodite has no chance of having Anchises made her immortal husband. Zeus needs Anchises to stay mortal for Aphrodite to remain beaten—shamed and without the ability to infect other gods with desire for humans.

253-55. When the gods act on their desire for mortals, who age and die, it is considered shameful (Smith 1981: 40).

257. Anchises knows about the tree nymphs of Mount Ida (97-98). They are an appropriate choice to raise the son of a goddess and man because they exist between immortality and mortality. They mingle with the gods and eat divine food, but they die after a very long life.

262. This is the earliest known reference to the Sileni, wild animal-men who, like satyrs, are connected with drink and sex.

286-88. In some later versions, Anchises does boast and Zeus strikes him impotent, lame, blind, or dead.

6. APHRODITE

This hymn follows the tradition of Aphrodite's birth told in Hesiod's *Theogony* (178-98): Ouranos (Sky) refused to let his children out of Gaia (Earth) after they were born, so Gaia asked her son Kronos to castrate his father. When Kronos did so, Ouranos' genitals fell into the sea. Aphrodite was born from the white sea-foam (*aphros*) that rose up around the genitals. She first floats to Cythera and then lands on Cyprus. The longer *Hymn to Aphrodite* 5, however, states that she is Zeus' daughter (81). In the *Iliad*, Aphrodite is the daughter of Zeus and Dione (a minor goddess whose name is merely a feminine form of Zeus). In this poem, Aphrodite has emerged on Cyprus, where the Horai dress her. Aphrodite is decorated and displayed to the gods in much the same way as Hesiod's Pandora, and they both "amaze" the gods with their beauty (cf. *Theogony* 588 and *Aphrodite* 6.17-18). See Loraux (1994: chap. 2) for more on this comparison.

14. When the Horai "adorned" Aphrodite, they literally "placed *kosmos*" on her. The Greek word *kosmos* means "decoration," "adornment," as well as "world," "universe," "order."

20. This hymn provides direct evidence that some, if not all, of the hymns were performed in contests.

7. DIONYSOS

See the *Hymn to Dionysos* 1 for Dionysos' birth story. Dionysos alters human beings through ecstasy, madness, or, as here, metamorphosis. The story of Dionysos and the pirates was popular and retold in numerous versions, including one in Euripides' *Cyclops*. An Attic black figure kylix by Exekias, in the mid-sixth century B.C.E., portrays Dionysos in the ship with grape vines above and dolphins around.

6. The Tyrsenian pirates either are Etruscans (from Italy) or Pelasgians (the non-Hellenic people in Thrace, Athens, and the island of Lemnos). Both non-Greek groups had a

reputation among Greeks for piracy. The “large” ship is literally described as “well-benched,” i.e., with many benches for rowing.

11-12. The pirates, believing Dionysos a prince, capture him for ransom or for sale into slavery (see the note to lines 28-29, below).

13. No ties can bind Hermes (4.409-10), who crosses boundaries, or Dionysos, who dissolves boundaries. In both hymns, the flexible boughs of slender willow immediately drop off the god.

15. Those who recognize and worship Dionysos are rewarded, while those who deny or are blind to his divinity are severely punished. This theme often recurs in the myths of Dionysos (see Euripides’ *Bacchae*). Here, the helmsman tries to stop the other pirates because he perceives that Dionysos is a major Olympian god: either Zeus himself, or Zeus’ son Apollo, or Zeus’ brother the sea god (19-20). All the other sailors end up dead or transformed into dolphins.

28-29. According to the captain, their captive might reach the ends of the world, wherever they could get the best price. Egypt or the island of Cyprus would be viewed by Etruscan sailors as particularly distant, and the Hyperboreans were a mythical people whose name means “beyond the north wind.”

35-42. Dionysos usually appears in literature and art with vines (38) and ivy (40).

55. The text is obscure or corrupt in addressing the helmsman.

8. ARES

The *Hymn to Ares* is strikingly different from all the other hymns in three ways: it contains five lines of solid epithets, connects Ares with the planet Mars (the Roman name for Ares), and contains a prayer for peace rather than for a successful song. A fifth-century C.E. date for the hymn’s composition helps explain these unusual elements (see West

1970), although composition as early as the third century B.C.E. is possible.

Ares usually represents all the destructive, bloodthirsty, and fatal aspects of war, while Athena is associated with the positive possibilities, such as defense of the city, righteous war, and victory. In myth, the other gods, including his parents Zeus and Hera, despise, outmaneuver, or beat Ares. This hymn, however, invokes an Ares with some Athena-like qualities: Athena is the city defender (11.1, 28.3) linked with Nike (Victory) and Themis (Law and Justice). Yet the hymn emphasizes manly strength (using six different words for “strong” alone). Ares is “mighty” (1, *hupermenos*, a word that means “exceedingly full of the strength and energy of the male life force”). The poet prays to the war god for “warrior strength” (11) to drive out his own evil and to “restrain” the “temper” (14, *menos*) that pushes him to war. He asks for “courage” to follow “peace” (16) instead of war. The poet calls on Ares’ extreme masculine strength to help him control his own *menos*. (In the *Hymn to Aphrodite* 5.188, Anchises asked Aphrodite not to make him *amenos*, “unmanned.”)

6–8. The “red orb” refers to the planet Mars. The seven planets, starting with the farthest from Earth, were believed to be Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, and the Moon, which would put Mars in the “third orbit” (Aristotle, *On the Cosmos* 2, 392A).

9. ARTEMIS

Artemis, mistress of wild animals, rules over hunting and the initiation of girls. Just as Apollo is god of opposites (sickness and healing), his sister Artemis is both virgin huntress and birth goddess. Throughout Asia Minor and Greece, women worshipped her with music, dance, and loud cries, as well as private prayers to survive childbearing. See *Artemis* 27 and *Aphrodite* 5.16–20 for more details.

3-5. The Meles river is just north of Smyrna, a large city on the coast of Asia Minor, north of the Ionic peninsula. Klaros, directly south of Smyrna and north of the important cult center of Artemis in Ephesus, had a temple to Apollo.

10. APHRODITE

See *Hymns to Aphrodite* 5 and 6 for myths of Aphrodite.

4. Salamis is a city on Cyprus.

11. ATHENA

See *Athena* 28 and *Aphrodite* 5.8-15 for a fuller portrait of Athena.

12. HERA

Hera was a fertility goddess, protector of certain cities, and goddess of marriage. The hymn begins in a traditional manner by invoking Hera, but lacks the farewell to the goddess and the transition to another song at the end. This may indicate that we have only the beginning lines of a longer hymn.

5. This hymn and *Aphrodite* 5.44 acknowledge an equality between the queen and king of the gods. Hera sits on the golden throne. Hera's status in actual worship was quite high. The "earliest and most important temples are dedicated to her" (Burkert 1985: 131). Yet most myths show Hera as subject to Zeus and unable to best him, even though she tries. In the *Hymn to Apollo* 3.337-51, Hera gives birth to the serpentine Typhon in order that he might overthrow Zeus. Many myths highlight her rage against Zeus' infidelities and his production of children without her. In her anger, Hera persecutes Zeus' other women, including those taken in rape, and the children that result.

13. DEMETER

This hymn is composed of two lines from the *Hymn to Demeter* 2 (1, 493) and a half line that is also found in the Alexandrian poet Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter* (132; see Lombardo and Rayor 1988).

14. MOTHER OF THE GODS

The Mother of the Gods or Great Mother was worshipped with wild, ecstatic music throughout the Mediterranean world. The Greeks commonly identified her with the Asiatic Cybele or with Rhea, mother of the Olympians, and sometimes with Demeter, the grain goddess.

15. HERAKLES

Herakles, the most popular Greek hero, with cult centers throughout the Mediterranean, was worshipped as a hero and a god and prayed to as the "Helper" or "Savior." His name means either "glory (*kleos*) of Hera" or "glory through Hera"—"he is simultaneously 'glorious through Hera' and 'he through whom glory comes to Hera'" (Loraux 1990: 44).

Zeus made love to Alkmene disguised as her husband, Amphitryon, who came home later that night. Twins resulted: Herakles, son of Zeus, and Iphikles, son of Amphitryon. Hera hated Herakles, another product of Zeus' infidelity. She sent snakes to kill him right after his birth. Later, Hera drove Herakles mad. In his madness, he killed his first wife, Megara, and their children. Seeking purification at Delphi for the murders, Herakles was instructed to complete twelve labors for Eurystheus, king of Argos, after which he would be deified.

His heroic adventures primarily consisted of making the world safe by slaying ferocious animals and monsters. In myth, he is portrayed as a glutton, drunkard, and libertine bedding fifty women in one night. Herakles represented the

extreme in masculinity and heroic excess. He was stronger than ordinary men and had stronger appetites: the perfect hero for accomplishing impossible tasks, but not someone to invite home for dinner to meet the family. Myth describes Herakles as more than a man, but also as animal-like: he wore a lion cloak complete with head and was himself very hairy.

Herakles' fate was inextricably tied to women, beginning with Hera. He was portrayed as a lover of women and a misogynist—"in more than one Greek city the exclusion of women figures among the specific traits of the cult of Herakles" (Loraux 1990: 25). In payment for a murder, Herakles had to serve the Lydian Queen Omphale, dressed as a woman and doing women's chores, such as weaving. After his labors Herakles' wife, Deianeira, unintentionally gave him a poisoned cloak, believing it a love charm that could win him back from the mistress he brought home with him (Sophocles' *Trachiniae*). In agony from the fatal poison, Herakles burned himself alive on a funeral pyre. After a life of extreme suffering, and pleasure, Herakles was rewarded with immortality. Hera finally reconciled with Herakles after his apotheosis and married him to Hebe (Youth), her and Zeus' daughter. Herakles breached all boundaries: he conquered cities, men, monsters, even death, yet he also experienced being a servant, a slave, and a woman.

16. ASKLEPIOS

Asklepios the doctor god, whose snake-entwined staff still symbolizes the medical profession, was a mortal hero who became a god. When the hero Asklepios became too good at his job and brought the dead back to life, Zeus killed him with a lightning bolt to restore the natural order. Then Asklepios was deified.

People came to his cult centers, such as the famous one at Epidauros, for healing through a process combining physical, psychiatric, and magical medicine. After offering sacrifices to

Asklepios, the patient would undergo “incubation,” which consisted of sleeping in an underground chamber. The god was expected either to cure the person or to appear in a dream, usually in the form of a snake. Upon waking, the patient would tell the dream to a priest, who would interpret it and prescribe a course of action.

2. For Koronis, see *Apollo* 3.209–10, with note.

3. The Dotion plain is in Thessalia, south of Mount Olympos.

17. DIOSKOUROI

This is a short version of the nineteen-line *Hymn to the Dioskouroi* 33. The Dioskouroi, the paradigm of active young men, were worshipped as saviors in battle and in storms at sea. Saint Elmo’s fire, the electrical discharge sometimes seen on the masts of ships (and other projecting objects) during storms, signaled their arrival. The name “Dioskouroi” means “young men or sons of Zeus.” Zeus, in the form of a swan, raped Leda, who gave birth to two eggs; one held the twins Kastor and Polydeukes, and the other Helen and Klytemnestra. Some versions say that Kastor and his sister Klytemnestra are the mortal children of Leda’s husband, King Tyndareus of Sparta, while Polydeukes and Helen are the immortal children of Zeus.

3. Taygetos is the mountain range west of Sparta in the Peloponnesus.

5. “Tyndarids” means “offspring of Tyndareus.”

18. HERMES

This is a short version of the *Hymn to Hermes* 4.

19. PAN

All but three hymns include the name of the deity in the first line, usually as the first word. By beginning with “Hermes’ dear son” instead of the name “Pan,” this hymn emphasizes Hermes’ role. The second half of the hymn celebrates Pan’s birth and introduction into the pantheon. For other birth narratives, see *Apollo* 3, *Hermes* 4, and *Athena* 28.

Pan, the ithyphallic goat god of flocks and wild places, was worshipped only locally in Arcadia, in central Peloponnesus, until the fifth century. According to Herodotos (6.105), the Athenians began worshipping Pan after the battle of Marathon in 490 B.C.E.. Before the battle, the Athenians sent a long-distance runner to ask the Spartans to help them fight the invading Persians. On his way over a mountain, the runner met Pan, who asked why the Athenians ignored his goodwill, although he had helped them before and would again. After the Athenians won the battle, they built a temple to Pan and worshipped him.

3. Pan is in constant movement in the first half of the hymn, first wandering alone in the wilds, then dancing with the mountain nymphs (19).

5. In this hymn, the nymphs, instead of the bard, invoke Pan and sing the whole story in the second part of the hymn. The nymphs, as liminal creatures in between humans and gods, are appropriate mediators of this unusual god (Haubold 2001).

15. In *Hermes* 4.512, Hermes invents Pan’s instrument, the panpipes or syrinx.

27-47. The nymphs sing the story of Pan’s birth and reception among the gods.

32. Hermes served as shepherd to the mortal man Dryops in order to marry his daughter, Dryope. “Dryops” (oak voice) is a kind of woodpecker; Dryope would be an oak spirit.

38. Pan causes some people, such as his mother, to flee in fear (panic) at the sight and sound of him. Others, such as all the gods, delight in him (41, 45, 47). *Pan* is the Greek word for “all” (47).

45. Hermes, “who gives joy and good fortune” (18.12), produces and reveals Pan (Haubold 2001).

46. For more on Dionysos, see *Hymns to Dionysos* 1, 7, and 26. He had a particularly close relationship with Pan.

48-49. The bard directly addresses Pan only here, at the end of the hymn.

20. HEPHAISTOS

Except for lame Hephaistos, all the Olympian gods appear perfect in beauty and form. Hephaistos is the fire and smith god. While famous mainly for metalworking, Hephaistos made the body of Pandora, the first woman (Hesiod, *Theogony* 571-72). In the *Iliad*, he is the son of Zeus and Hera; in the *Theogony* (927-28), Hera conceived him by herself out of anger at Zeus for giving birth to Athena. Athena and Hephaistos join together to civilize human beings by teaching them crafts and the use of fire.

21. APOLLO

See the *Hymn to Apollo* 3. Phoibos Apollo is the god of controlled music (as on the lyre), rather than the wild and ecstatic music of Pan and Dionysos (pipes and percussion).

1. Swans are frequently associated with Apollo and with music. The sound of wind through feathers in flight produces a kind of music.

2. The Peneios river runs through the Dotion plain in Thessalia, south of Mount Olympos.

22. POSEIDON

An Olympian son of Kronos and Rhea, Poseidon won the sea as his portion in the early division in which Zeus received the sky and Hades the underworld. Poseidon, often portrayed with a trident, competed with Athena to be the patron deity of

Athens. He offered water and she the olive tree. In many ways, Poseidon and Athena are opposites, as can be seen in the conflict between Poseidon and Athena's representative, Odysseus, in the *Odyssey*. Poseidon, as the sea, represents the brute force and unpredictability of nature. Athena represents human cunning and manufacture—the ability to think and to mold nature into useful forms.

3. Helike and Aigai are neighboring towns in Achaea on the southern shore of the Gulf of Corinth. The other possible Aigai is in Euboea (see *Apollo* 3.32).

23. ZEUS

Zeus, the sky and weather god, usually depicted with lightning bolt in hand, rules the pantheon. Hesiod's *Theogony* shows how Zeus took and maintained his power. Zeus conquered his own father, Kronos. Then he swallowed his first wife, Metis (Intelligence), to literally incorporate wisdom into himself and to prevent her from conceiving a son who could conquer him. His second wife, Themis, the goddess of justice and law, represents the nature of his rule. After a brief series of intervening goddesses, Zeus chose Hera for his last wife. All of the twelve Olympian deities are either his siblings or his children.

24. HESTIA

Hestia, hearth goddess, “represents not only the centre of the domestic sphere. Sealed in the ground, the circular hearth denotes the navel which ties the house to the earth. It is the symbol and pledge of fixity, immutability, and permanence” (Vernant 1983: 128). The hearth at Delphi (Pytho) was the spiritual center, the *omphalos* (navel), of the Greek world and the source of purifying fire. See *Hestia and Hermes* 29 and *Aphrodite* 5.21–32 for more on Hestia.

3. The Greeks used olive oil, perfumed for special occasions, on their hair.

5. Zeus, as god of the *polis* (city-state), frequently was worshipped with Hestia.

25. THE MUSES, APOLLO, AND ZEUS

This hymn is composed of pieces from Hesiod's *Theogony*: line 1 is close to *Theogony* 1, lines 2-5 are nearly the same as *Theogony* 94-97, and line 6 is close to *Theogony* 104.

See *Apollo* 3 and *Zeus* 23.

26. DIONYSOS

See *Dionysos* 1 and 7.

27. ARTEMIS

See the *Artemis* 9 and *Aphrodite* 5.16-20 for more details on Artemis.

15. The nine Muses and the three Graces (Charites) are the usual companions of Apollo as the god of lyre music and dance.

28. ATHENA

Athena was born from Zeus' head, according to this hymn, fully armed. See also *Athena* 11 and *Aphrodite* 5.8-15.

4. The epithet "Tritogeneia," used only of Athena, may mean "born on the third day."

13. Even the sun stopped moving until Athena took off her armor.

29. HESTIA AND HERMES

Although the hearth goddess and the messenger god would seem to have little in common, Hestia and Hermes are joined as complementary deities directly involved in daily human life: “Because her fate is to reign, forever immobile, at the centre of the domestic sphere, Hestia implies, as her complement and her contrast, the swift-footed god who rules the realms of the traveller. To Hestia belongs the world of the interior, the enclosed, the stable, the retreat of the human group within itself; to Hermes, the outside world, opportunity, movement, interchange with others” (Vernant 1983: 130). See *Hestia* 24 and *Aphrodite* 5.21-32 for more on Hestia, and *Hermes* 4 and *Pan* 19 for Hermes.

5-6. Libations were offered to Hestia at the beginning and end of meals. Some people connect the myth of her birth, in which she was born first and last (see the note to *Aphrodite* 5.21-23), to the libation ritual.

7. At bedtime Hermes received the last libation. Hermes was the guardian of the house at night, the protector against night terrors and the sender of dreams.

30. GAIA

According to Hesiod (*Theogony* 117), Gaia, Mother Earth, first came into being out of the Void (*Khaos*). She gave birth to Heaven (Ouranos, 17), mountains, and sea. Mating with Ouranos, she bore the Titans, the generation of gods before the Olympians.

31. HELIOS

The hymns to the Sun and the Moon (*Selene* 32) form a beautiful pair, similar in language and style. Although nearly absent in cult, Helios and Selene are sometimes grouped with the Olympian gods in pedimental sculpture. Euryphaessa (literally, “wide-shining one”) and Hyperion, a Titan son of Gaia and Ouranos, are the parents of Helios, Selene, and Eos

(Dawn). In other versions, Theia is the mother of the three (Hesiod, *Theogony* 371). Helios was invoked in oaths and called on as witness.

1. Kalliope is the chief Muse.

15-16. This image is of the Sun driving his chariot through the sky all day until he reaches the Ocean at the edge of the world.

20. Demigods, the heroes whose deeds are sung in epic tales, are the mortal children born from the unions of gods and humans. Only this hymn and the following, clearly preludes to epic songs, end by promising to sing of their glory.

32. SELENE

1. Only here is the Moon “long-winged.” Perhaps the poet pictures a winged goddess like Eos, or shadows or clouds around the moon.

8-10. Selene leaves the Ocean, driving her chariot through the sky all night.

11. Since the Greeks figured months from each new moon, the moon waxed full at midmonth.

15. Pandeia has no mythology; she is a representation of the moon herself.

33. DIOSKOUROI

See the notes on *Dioskouroi* 17, the short version of this hymn.

34. XENOI

This five-line poem is found at the end of some manuscripts of the *Hymns*, although it is not a hymn to a god. Instead, it addresses all hosts (*xenoi*), reminding them of their sacred

duty to provide hospitality (*xenia*, the guest-host relationship) to strangers or guests (*xenoi*).

2. Hera's city is Cyme, on the Aeolian coast of Asia Minor, south of the island Lesbos.

5. The large Hermus river flows to the sea south of Cyme.

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GLOSSARY

The glossary includes the names of gods, humans, and places, showing syllable divisions and the primary accent for pronunciation; after a brief description, the hymn number (with line, where appropriate) of the first reference is given.

GODS

Aegis-bearer Zeus; the aegis is a goatskin cloak or shield of power. (4.183)

Aph-ro-dí-te Goddess of love and sexuality, born from Zeus and Dione or from Ouranos' severed genitals mixed with sea-foam. (2.102)

A-pól-lo God of music, prophecy, healing and sickness; son of Zeus and Leto. (3)

Ár-es God of war, son of Zeus and Hera. (1.31)

Ár-te-mis Mistress of wild animals; goddess of hunting, childbirth, and rearing of young; daughter of Zeus and Leto. (2.424)

As-klé-pi-os God of healing, the deified son of Apollo and Koronis. (16)

A-thé-na Goddess of wisdom, war, crafts, and kingship. Zeus gave birth to Athena from his head after swallowing his pregnant wife, Metis (Intelligence). (2.424)

Cy-thér-i-a Aphrodite. (5.6)

De-mé-ter Grain, fertility, and mother goddess; daughter of Rhea and Kronos. (2)

Dé-o Demeter. (2.47)

Di-ó-ne Zeus' mate, mother of Aphrodite. (3.93)

Di-o-ný-sos God of ecstasy, inspiration, religious possession, theater, and wine; son of Zeus and the mortal Semele. (1)

Di-os-kouí-roi Twins Kastor and Polydeukes, worshipped as saviors in battle and in storms at sea; brothers of Helen, sons of Zeus and the mortal Leda. While their name means "boys of Zeus," some versions of their birth hold that Kastor is the mortal son of Tyndareus. (17)

Ei-lei-thyí-a Goddess of childbirth. (3.97)

É-os Dawn goddess. (5.218)

Gaí-a Mother Earth, who gave birth to Ouranos and then with him produced the Titans. (2.8)

Graces The three Charites often are associated with Apollo and the Muses. (3.194)

Há-des God of the Underworld, son of Rhea and Kronos. (2.2)

Har-mó-ni-a Daughter of Aphrodite and Ares, married to the mortal Kadmos. (3.195)

Hé-be Youth, daughter of Hera and Zeus; she married Herakles when he became immortal. (3.195)

Hé-ka-te Chthonian (earth) goddess, a Titan, associated with Demeter and Persephone. (2.25)

Hé-li-os Sun god, son of Hyperion. (2.26)

He-phaís-tos Smith god, son of Zeus and Hera; in Hesiod, son of Hera alone. (1.17)

Hé-ra Goddess of marriage and fertility, Zeus' sister and wife. (1.7)

Hér-a-kles Deified mortal, son of the human woman Alkmene and Zeus. (15)

Hér-mes Guide, messenger, and trickster god; son of Zeus and Maia. (2.335)

Hés-ti-a Hearth goddess, eldest daughter of Rhea and Kronos. (5.21)

Hó-rai Goddesses of seasons, hours, and time. (3.194)

Hy-pér-i-on Titan, father of Helios, Selene, and Eos. (2.26)

Í-ris Rainbow, messenger goddess. (2.314)

Kró-nos Son of Gaia and Ouranos, father of Rhea's children. (1.41)

Lé-to Mother of Apollo and Artemis. (3.5)

Maí-a Mother of Hermes, daughter of Atlas and one of the Pleiades. (4.1)

Mne-mós-y-ne Memory, mother of the nine Muses. (4.429)

Moí-ra The goddess Destiny, referred to singly or as the three Moirai. (3.238)

Muses The nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne are the goddesses of poetic inspiration and the arts (later, all intellectual pursuits), sometimes referred to singly. (3.189)

Oú-ra-nos Heaven, son and mate of Gaia; father of the Titans. (30.17)

Pál-las Athena. (11.1)

Pan Goat god of flocks and wild places; son of Hermes and a nymph, Dryope. (19)

Per-séph-o-ne Queen of the Underworld, wife of Hades, daughter of Demeter and Zeus. (2.56)

Phoí-bos Apollo. (3.20)

Ploú-tos Wealth, particularly agricultural prosperity; son of Demeter. (2.488)

Pol-y-deú-kes Brother of Kastor, one of the Dioskouroi twins; son of Zeus and Leda. (17.1)

Po-seí-don God of horses, water, and earthquakes; son of Rhea and Kronos. (3.230)

Rhé-a Titan daughter of Gaia and Ouranos; Kronos' mate; mother of six Olympian gods: Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon, and Zeus. (2.59)

Se-lé-ne Moon, daughter of Hyperion. (4.99)

Slayer of Argos Hermes. (2.346)

Thé-mis Goddess of law and justice. (3.94)

Thé-tis Sea goddess mother of Achilles. (3.319)

Tý-phon A hundred-headed snake monster, who attempted to overthrow Zeus; son of Hera alone or of Gaia and Tartaros. (3.305)

Zéph-y-ros West wind. (6.3)

Zeus Sky and weather god; head of the hierarchy of gods, son of Rhea and Kronos, brother or father of all the Olympian deities. (1.2)

HUMANS

Ae-né-as Son of Aphrodite and Anchises. (5.198)

An-chí-ses Trojan man, onetime lover of Aphrodite. (5.53)

Dé-mo-phon Son of Metaneira and Keleos; Demeter tried to make him immortal. (2.234)

Gán-y-mede Son of Tros; Zeus made Ganymede his immortal cupbearer. (5.202)

I-ám-be Servant of Metaneira in Eleusis, who made Demeter laugh with her jokes; her name reflects the iambic meter used for verse lampoons. (2.195)

Kás-tor Brother of Polydeukes, one of the Dioskouroi twins; son of Leda and Tyndareus. (17.1)

Ké-le-os King of Eleusis. (2.96)

Ko-ró-nis Mother of Asklepios. (3.210)

Lé-da Mother of Helen, Klytemnestra, and the Dioskouroi. (17.3)

Me-ta-neí-ra Queen of Eleusis, mother of Demophon. (2.161)
Sém-e-le Mother of Dionysos, daughter of Kadmos (king of Thebes) and the goddess Harmonia. (1.4)
Ti-thó-nos Trojan brother of Priam; lover of Eos, who arranged for his immortality but forgot to ask for everlasting youth to go with it. (5.218)
Trip-tól-e-mos Prominent figure in Eleusinian mysteries. (2.153)
Tros Father of Ganymede. (5.207)
Tyn-dár-e-us Leda's husband, father of Kastor and Klytemnestra. (17.2)

PLACES

Aí-gai A town in Euboea on the Euboean Gulf (3.32), or in Achaea on the southern shore of the Gulf of Corinth. (22.3)
Al-phé-os River near Olympia in Elis in the western Peloponnesus. (1.3)
Ar-cá-di-a District in the center of the Peloponnesus. (4.2)
Chí-os Island south of Lesbos. (3.38)
Crete Largest island at the southernmost end of the Aegean. (2.123)
Cý-prus Large island west of Syria. (5.58)
Cy-thé-ra Island at the southeast tip of the Peloponnesus; associated with Aphrodite. (Cytheria, 5.6)
Dé-los Apollo's birthplace; a tiny island near Naxos, roughly at the center of the Cyclades, in the Aegean. (3.16)
Dél-phi Pytho, Apollo's main oracular site, on the mainland north of the Gulf of Corinth, on Mount Parnassus. (27.14)
E-leú-sis A town fourteen miles north of Athens; the center of the Eleusinian Mysteries. (2.97)
Ér-e-bos Underworld or House of Hades. (2.335)

Eu-boé-a A long, narrow island northeast of Attica, with narrow straits on one side and the Aegean on the other. (3.31)

Í-da Mountain in Troas, south of Troy (northwest modern-day Turkey). (3.34)

In-ó-pos Stream on Mount Kynthos on Delos. (3.18)

Képh-i-sos River pouring into Lake Copais in the district of Boeotia. (3.240)

Klá-ros City east of Chios, on the coast of Asia Minor; it had an important temple of Apollo. (3.40)

Knós-sos Palace city on Crete, which, according to legend, was ruled by King Minos, son of Zeus and Europa. (3.393)

Kos Island in the Sporades, south of Samos. (3.42)

Krí-sa Port town at the foot of Mount Parnassus, near Delphi. (3.269)

Kyl-lé-ne Mountain in Arcadia, associated with Hermes. (4.2)

Kýn-thos: A hill at the peak of Delos. (3.17)

Lém-nos Island west of Troy. (3.36)

Lés-bos Large island south of Troy. (3.37)

Mi-lé-tos City on the coast of Asia Minor, near the island of Samos. (3.42)

Náx-os Island closest to the center of the Cyclades in the Aegean Sea, where Dionysos found Ariadne after Theseus abandoned her. (1.2)

Ný-sa Many places, located in and out of Greece, were named Nysa. (1.8)

O-lým-pos Mountain in the district of Pieria, south of Macedonia; also the home of the Olympian gods. (1.43)

On-chés-tos Site of a famous sacred grove of Poseidon, on the south shore of Lake Copais in Boeotia. (3.230)

Or-týg-i-a Artemis' birthplace, also called Rheneia, the closest island to Delos. (3.16)

Par-nás-sus Mountain, home of Delphi. (3.269)

Pár-os Island neighboring Naxos, in the Cyclades. (2.491)

Pel-o-pon-né-sus The large peninsula primarily to the south of mainland Greece. (3.250)

Phoe-ní-cia Coastal region north of modern-day Israel. (1.9)

Pi-ér-i-a Home of the Muses, in northern Greece, south of Macedonia. (3.216)

Pý-los City in the northwestern Peloponnesus in the district of Elis. Another Pylos is located on the southwestern coast of the Peloponnesus. (3.397)

Pý-tho Delphi. (3.183)

Sá-mos Island close to the coast of Asia Minor, south of Klaros. (3.41)

Styx River in the underworld, by which the gods swear their unbreakable oaths. (2.259)

Tár-tar-os The underworld. (1.19)

Ta-ýg-e-tos Mountain west of Sparta in the Peloponnesus. (17.3)

Tel-phú-sa Both a spring at the foot of Mount Helicon, east of Delphi, and a nymph. (3.244)

Thebes Prominent city in Boeotia. (1.5)

Troy City in northern Asia Minor, near the mouth of the Hellespont, across from Lesbos. (5.66)